DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 920 JC 970 532

AUTHOR	Gilbert, Sid; Chapman, Judy; Dietsche, Peter; Grayson, Paul; Gardner, John N.
TITLE	From Best Intentions to Best Practices: The First-Year Experience in Canadian Postsecondary Education. Monograph Series Number 22.
INSTITUTION	South Carolina Univ., Columbia. National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	160p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Resource Center For the Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, 1728 College Street, Columbia, SC 29208; telephone: (803) 777-6029; (803) 777-4699 ($40 Canadian, $30, U.S.)
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Ancillary School Services; *College Freshmen; Community Colleges; *Educational Assessment; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Institutional Evaluation; Program Evaluation; *School Surveys; Student Personnel Services; *Student Surveys; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

This document reviews the results of the first comprehensive survey of the first year in Canadian postsecondary education, and examines the range and consequences of courses of study. It explores students' perceptions of their first year, and evaluates the programs and services that were offered. Chapter 1 compares and contrasts the American and Canadian approaches to first-year community college programs. Possible explanations for differences are also included. Chapter 2 contains profiles of entering Canadian community college students, and describes their first year experience. Chapter 3 details the nature of first-year programs and services along with observations on the institutional climate and delivery characteristics. Chapter 4 outlines the entering characteristics and motivation of first-year university students, along with their transition experiences and educational outcomes. Chapter 5 reports survey findings about the nature and assessment of first-year programs and services. Chapter 6 profiles and evaluates a number of institutions offering comprehensive First Year Experience programs. Chapter 7 links case studies, program outcomes and student experiences to represent a performance indicator for universities and colleges. Assessment and evaluation are identified as powerful motivators for improvement. Summary comments, observations, and policy recommendations are also included. Appendices supply research methodology, the survey instrument, the individuals who completed the survey, a description of the population, and further responses to the survey. (YKH)

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Monograph Series
Number 22

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FROM BEST INTENTIONS TO BEST PRACTICES:

THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE IN CANADIAN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

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The Freshman Year Experience
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Additional copies of this monograph may be ordered at $40 Canadian (U.S. $30) each from the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina, 1728 College Street, Columbia, SC 29208. Telephone (803) 777-6029. Telefax (803) 777-4699.

Special gratitude is expressed to Randolph Handel, Corinna M. McLeod, and Derick Rhodes, Assistant Editors, for editing, design, and layout of this monograph; to Dr. Betsy Barefoot, Co-Director for Publications and Research; and to Dr. Dorothy Fidler, Senior Managing Editor.

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ISBN Number: 1-889271-21-7

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PREFACE

How students experience the first year of study at colleges and universities is important for their continuation, grades, degree completion, satisfaction and a number of other positive student outcomes. There is a rich and increasingly systematic body of information and research on The Freshman Year Experience (FYE) in the United States. What is needed is a profile and an analysis of the growing FYE (meaning The *First-Year* Experience) in Canada.

The purpose of this monograph is to review the results of the first comprehensive survey of the first year in Canadian postsecondary education, to include both colleges and universities, and to examine the range and consequences of courses and programs designed to improve the first year of study. The study proceeds from both an individual and institutional point of view. First, we are interested in how students perceive, experience and adjust to that important and formative first year.

Second, we are interested in documenting exactly which programs/services are offered by postsecondary institutions, how they are offered (delivery characteristics) and evaluated or assessed. This information is extremely useful to institutions for planning and in dealing with quality and accountability issues. The study will also identify which practices work or do not work and the circumstances under which positive results are achieved. Our aim is to be as inclusive as possible, to highlight success and best practices, and generally, to provide information to internal and external stakeholders on what works and what doesn't so that improvements can be made to the quality of our programs and services. This monograph should be of interest to students, faculty, student services professionals, staff, and institutional managers in Canada and the United States.

The national survey and this monograph are a collaborative effort. However, some chapters were the primary responsibility of specific individuals. Peter Dietsche wrote Chapters 2 and 3 dealing with the colleges, and Paul Grayson wrote Chapter 4 on university student experiences.

Chapter 1 reviews the American experience and compares and contrasts this with the interest, experience and development of first-year programs to date in Canada. Commonalities and differences in approach are noted along with possible explanatory factors. The policy interest in FYE programs in Canada is identified.

Chapter 2 provides a description of The First-Year Experience for students at Canadian community colleges and technical institutes. A profile of the characteristics of entering students and their academic, social and student service experiences is presented.

Chapter 3 details the nature of first-year community college programs and services along

with observations on the institutional climate and delivery characteristics.

Chapter 4 outlines the entering characteristics and motivation of first-year university students along with their transition experiences and educational outcomes.

Chapter 5 reports survey findings about the nature of first-year programs and services at Canadian universities including information on the kinds of courses/programs, their objectives, structures and assessments/evaluations of their success.

Chapter 6 profiles a number of institutions offering unique or comprehensive FYE programs. Some community colleges and universities have programs, courses or services that are innovative or represent a systematic, holistic effort to foster student success. While the focus of Chapters 3 and 5 is on courses and programs, this chapter conveys a sense of institutional climate by examining how the courses and programs cohere around a unified mission and purpose or how strategic initiatives fit within specific institutional objectives. These case studies profile best practices and institutions that intentionally try to involve and engage students.

Chapter 7 relates the student experience themes identified in Chapters 2 and 4 to the programs and courses described in Chapters 3 and 5 and to the institutional cultures described in the case studies. The linking of case studies, program outcomes and student experiences represents a performance indicator for universities and colleges. The focus on assessment and evaluation is identified as a particularly powerful motivator for improvement and change. Finally, this chapter contains summary comments, observations, and policy recommendations.

The appendices supply additional information: research methodology, the survey instrument, the individuals who completed the survey, a description of the population, as well as further responses to the survey.

This monograph is the result of a number of very important and special partnerships between:

- Canadian and American educators
- Canadian community colleges and universities
- Faculty, academic administrators, and student services officers
- Scholars/researchers and practitioners
- Canadian higher education associations representing the universities, the community colleges, and the student services profession in Canada
- Multiple institutions—the University of Guelph, the University of Regina, Humber College, the University of Victoria, the University of Prince Edward Island, York University, and the University of South Carolina.

The monograph would not have become a reality without the visionary leadership of John Gardner, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition and North America's chief advocate for first-year college students. We are indebted to John for his recognition of the importance of the research that is the subject of this publication and for his willingness to collaborate with us on this endeavor. John's deep personal and professional interest in the first college year has been the driving force behind all the activities of the National Resource Center which include numerous American, Canadian-American, and International Conferences on the first year as well as other significant research initiatives and publications.

In Canada, we should recognize the important contributions of the late Kenneth Long of the University of Windsor, who was the first Canadian educator to replicate the University of South Carolina's University 101 first-year seminar at the University of Windsor. We also recognize the role of other Canadian and American educators to the growth and development of first-year programs at Canadian colleges and universities: Paul P. Fidler and A. Jerome Jewler of the University of South Carolina, Jim Griffith

of the University of Victoria, Serge Piccinin of the University of Ottawa, Andy Robb and Verne Smitheram of the University of Prince Edward Island have all been essential to the evolution of a variety of first-year initiatives at Canadian postsecondary institutions.

We are also indebted to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), and the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) for their sponsorship of this important research project and to the institutions and the individual respondents to the survey (see Appendices C and D) who provided a wealth of detail on first-year studies, programs, and services.

Finally, we have benefited from the patience and professionalism of Betsy Barefoot, Dorothy Fidler, and Mary Stuart Hunter at the University of South Carolina. Robert Davidson and Herb O'Heron at the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada have provided important guidance and support. Similarly, Terry Anne Boyles and Lynne Chevrier at the Association of Canadian Community Colleges were instrumental in fielding the community college survey. Garth Wannan, President of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, was very enthusiastic and helpful.

Despite the individual, institutional, and organizational support we have received, the analysis, interpretations, and conclusions of this research remain the responsibility of the authors and do not reflect the policies of AUCC, ACCC, CACUSS, or the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition.

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Chapter One

From Darwin to Durkheim

The purpose of the monograph is to review the nature of the first year for Canadian postsecondary students and to examine the range and consequences of courses and programs designed to improve their first year of study. The review is based on profiles and analysis outlining practices and research concerning efforts to improve the learning, success, satisfaction, retention, and ultimately the graduation of first-year Canadian postsecondary students. In contrast to the relatively recent effort to develop a Canadian literature base on the status of the first-year experience in higher education, there is a rich and increasingly systematic body of information and data on the first-year experience (still commonly referred to as "The Freshman Year Experience") in the United States. This chapter first presents a summary and analysis of the movement in the U. S. to rethink and redesign the foundation of the undergraduate experience, the first year. With the American experience as background and context, the Canadian experience to date is described fostering a comparison and contrast between the two national experiences. Commonalities and differences in approach are noted along with possible explanatory factors. The policy interest in first-year experience programs in Canada is also identified.

Most succinctly stated, this relatively new focus on the first-year experience in both the United States and Canada arose in response to a set of circumstances—economic, demographic, social, cultural, structural, political, philosophical, pedagogical, and financial. Thus, the first-year experience "movement" can be viewed as a possible solution to a number of educational and, in a larger context, societal problems. This chapter highlights the bases for these problems and then presents (a) the essence of the first-year experience as a philosophy, a set of values and assumptions; (b) some details about the organization or structure of the freshman year experience; (c) the lessons learned from 25 years of U. S. experience; (d) where that American experience is likely to be headed in the last half of the 1990s; (e) the classic or traditional philosophy of Canadian education along with the important structural and ideological changes that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s; and (f) the economic and financial conditions of the 1980s and early 1990s as the policy context within which recent attention to the first-year experience in Canada has developed.

Origins of the American Freshman Year Experience

For as long as there has been some form of postsecondary education in the United States, there has been an educational experience, broadly defined, for new students. More specifically, students have been arriving on campuses in the United States since the first class entered Harvard College in 1636. Until 1945 (the end of World War II), first-year students in the U. S. looked very much as they did in 1636 in that they were predominately White, male,

Protestant, from property owning classes, and at the very least, middle class. It was that cohort of the American social stratification system that determined, for better or worse, the structure and content of first-year collegiate experience. For the most part, prior to World War II the American model of higher education was elitist, with highly restricted access and limited opportunity for upward social mobility through higher education.

The current movement to change the American first collegiate year came about as a direct response to a large number of problems and circumstances that had arisen in American society and American higher education. Between 1945 and 1980 American postsecondary education moved dramatically away from its elitist, limited-access origin and became much more egalitarian with open access for all types of new students. This led in turn to appropriate concern for the retention and graduation rates of underprepared students, due to the mismatch between first generation college students and higher education cultures which assumed prior familiarity, understanding, and comfort levels. Let us examine this transition in more detail.

Unquestionably, World War II was one of the greatest catalysts for the growth of higher education in U. S. history. World War II immediately and dramatically changed the role of the federal government with respect to higher education. It led to the infusion of billions of government dollars into universities to harness their capacity for applied research for military purposes, especially the development of the atomic bomb. Due to this massive infusion of external funding for research, a shift in faculty roles and rewards began to take place whereby faculty were encouraged to reduce their direct contact with students in favour of research commitments. Prior to World War II, faculty members were responsible for virtually all direct student contact functions such as advising, counselling, administration of residence halls, supervision of intercollegiate athletics, administration of disciplines, etc. As faculty roles began to change, more and more faculty began to emulate the research university model. The prior faculty role of providing extensive direct contact and support for first-year college students was gradually subsumed by a new profession, student services. That most significant development gave shape to many of the current aspects of the first-year experience, particularly the extensive contact that student services officers have (as opposed to faculty) with America's new college students. World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War also gave a tremendous stimulus to the growth of higher education because federal financial support was provided for millions of war veterans to attend college and hence to have an unprecedented opportunity for upward social mobility.

In the middle of the Civil Rights era the American government made a major commitment to provide access to higher education for virtually all American high school graduates who wanted to attend college. The Higher Education Act of 1965, in particular, authorized the creation of a plethora of federal financial aid programs which, for the better part of 15-plus years, provided a generous series of grants and loans to enable students to finance their higher education (these programs still exist but have become loan- rather than grant-oriented). Simultaneously, as a component of the Civil Rights movement, the federal government became much more involved in promoting the desegregation of American colleges and universities in more than 20 states. This desegregation process led the federal government and its Office of Civil Rights to insure that minority students were admitted to colleges, and that once admitted, they were offered more than a revolving door. State public education systems were required to enter into compliance agreements which certified that adequate means of support and other forms of compensatory attention were provided to insure that the new minority students were not simply donating their time and money with no real chance of postsecondary success.

During this same period, the number of American institutions increased dramatically, especially due to the growth of American community colleges and the proliferation of "regional and branch campuses" as offshoots from the original American flagship state public universities. All these initiatives combined to increase the number of students attending college for the

first time and dramatically changed the nature and character of the student body. No longer could students be described as primarily White and male, New England Protestant, property owning, and affluent.

As a result of these changes, beginning in the 1970s and increasing dramatically over the 1980s and '90s, discussion focused on student retention, (i.e., concern about relatively low graduation rates and a special focus on high dropout rates in the first year of college). By the mid-1980s a number of government and higher education associations decided to re-examine the nature and quality of undergraduate education, at the very least to pay more attention to undergraduates at large research universities. The rising cost of operating the higher education enterprise, particularly on account of increased utility costs due to the 1973 oil embargo and other inflationary pressures of the late 1970s, clearly became a foundation for the focus on the economic implications of attrition. At the same time, the demographics of the American society caught up with the realities of student recruitment and retention. During the 1979-82 recessionary period, the maximum number of traditional age high school graduates peaked and entered a long period of demographic decline only to level out by the middle 1990s and then to gradually inch upwards for the balance of the decade. Students in the declining traditional age pool were increasingly drawn from demographic cohorts without prior history and experience with college. These students were more likely to be underprepared and hence at greater risk in the first year. Other demographic changes on American campuses meant that larger percentages of first-year students were part-time, commuting, and nontraditional aged as opposed to the historic American first-year cohort of White, male, residential, middle class, 18-year-old students.

A number of compelling national reports during the middle 1980s argued for more attention for first-year students beginning with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1984), and followed by *Involvement in Learning* (National Institute of Education, 1984), *To Reclaim a Legacy* (National Endowment for Humanities, 1984), and *Integrity in the College Classroom* (Association of American Colleges, 1985). *Involvement in Learning* went so far as to argue for a new kind of "front-loading" which specifically meant a shift in resources from the esoteric specialties in the upper division to teaching the fundamentals of the college curriculum in the first and second years of the collegiate experience.

In 1982 the University of South Carolina launched a series of National and International Conferences on The Freshman Year Experience. This conference series was an outgrowth of the University's ten-year experience in implementing its own highly successful transition seminar for first-year students, University 101. A first conference on the freshman seminar led to a series of more widely focused conferences on the larger dimensions of the first collegiate year experience. This conference series, attended to date by approximately 24,000 participants from approximately 30 countries, is widely credited as being a major factor in calling more attention to the desirability of improving the first-year experience.

American professional higher education associations also began to focus on undergraduate issues including the specific needs of first-year students. These organizations were the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), and the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). The AAHE took one very dramatic step in 1985 by organizing the first National Conference on Assessment. From 1985 through 1995, ten such annual meetings have been held, involving approximately 15,000 educators. These meetings provided a tremendous stimulus for the dramatic increase in the use of performance indicators and all sorts of strategies to assess student learning and value added during the undergraduate experience.

This increased focus on the first college year brought about the important realization that attrition could in many cases be prevented and/or reduced and that unnecessary attrition was a very expensive factor wreaking havoc with institutional budgets and resources. While other altruistic factors came into play, there is no question that the economics of the student

learning, satisfaction, and retention equation were the single most important factor in explaining the marked increase of interest in the success of first-year college students.

The Freshman/First-Year Experience as a Philosophy, Set of Values, and Assumptions

The most important thing we can say initially about the concept of The First-Year Experience is that it is not one particular program or approach to enhancing learning and success in the first collegiate year. Rather, it is a pervasive educational philosophy which includes a set of concepts, values, and assumptions. This philosophy has led to myriad programmatic initiatives to enhance student learning and success. There is no one way, or even one best way, of doing The First-Year Experience. There is no panacea. There is no quick fix. Instead, there are as many approaches to enhancing the first year as there are distinct institutional cultures. In spite of all these acknowledged differences, however, there appear to be some common elements in successful first-year programs.

The First-Year Experience represents a deliberate attempt to create an institutional response to the aforementioned educational and social changes. The idea here is really quite simple—it involves educators on a given campus developing a comprehensive definition of first-year student success and then taking deliberate and intentional steps to insure the responsibility, empowerment, and support necessary to achieve this definition of success for new students. More specifically, Upcraft and Gardner in their 1989 work, *The Freshman Year Experience: Helping Students Survive and Succeed in College*, argue that first-year college students succeed when they make progress toward fulfilling the following educational and personal goals:

- Developing academic and intellectual competence
- Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships
- Developing personal identity
- Deciding on a career and lifestyle
- Maintaining personal health and wellness
- Developing an integrated philosophy of life (pp. 2-3).

The First-Year Experience is a philosophy that represents a deliberately designed attempt to provide a rite of passage during which students are supported, welcomed, celebrated, and ultimately accommodated within higher education communities. It is also an attempt to create for each first-year student what Carl Rogers described as a "significant other," (i.e., some caring adult employee of the institution, or at the very least a trained peer professional, who can show the way). A plethora of advising and mentoring reform initiatives provide a significant other and are consistent with the body of research literature which correlates enhanced retention with the provision of role models, mentors, reference individuals, or support networks.

The First-Year Experience involves setting deliberate goals for the first year and devising intentional strategies to help first-year students achieve these goals. It also involves identifying variables that interfere with first-year success and designing programs to address those barriers. It involves educating employees on how to spot potential college dropouts and how to intervene accordingly.

The First-Year Experience philosophy also involves making positive rather than negative predictions for student success. Such a practice represents a profound reversal of the academic, social Darwinist tradition which asserted that only the fittest could and should survive and that institutions had no obligations to intervene or to provide compensatory support; in fact, to do so would have been inappropriate or even immoral (and meant lowering standards). The First-Year Experience is a philosophy which also suggests that educators need to validate their own assumptions about students by attempting to see the institutional experience through their eyes. This empathy and understanding can only develop through extensive interaction with students. Hence, The First-Year Experience suggests more interaction, collegiality, and communication between first-year students and faculty, the latter group having increasingly

isolated itself over the previous 50 years from direct contact with first-year students.

First-Year Experience programs are more likely to be achieved through some kind of collective and cooperative campus-wide approach than through a single office or individual responsible for the first-year students. As The First-Year Experience approach is implemented on many campuses, it has increasingly become a priority of top institutional leaders, senior decision makers, especially chief academic officers and the senior faculty. The First-Year Experience is also most likely to be consummated on a campus where an effective working partnership exists among academic and student affairs administrators and faculty members.

The First-Year Experience is also a unique personification of the concept of a "support group" (i.e., individuals who are involved in a critical life transition that is important and stressful, said group being led by a survivor of that same transition). The First-Year Experience philosophy argues that there may be no such thing as the average first-year student and that instead there are a large number of homogenous sub-populations of first-year students which need to be understood, addressed, and supported on a separate basis. The First-Year Experience approach is one that can be described as holistic since it attempts to address multiple dimensions of student learning during the collegiate years in terms of students' academic, personal, social, spiritual, and physical growth.

The conceptual architecture which structures The First-Year Experience moves beyond the graduate school model, which dictates to many young academics that their future success in higher education will be directly proportionate to their distance from first-year students. Those most likely to be advocates for first-year students are senior members of the faculty, full professors, senior academic and student personnel administrators. Finally, the concept of The First-Year Experience involves the idea of advocacy—advocating and recognizing, rewarding and celebrating those who stick their necks out, professionally and personally, on behalf of first-year students.

Organizational/Structural Elements of The First-Year Experience

The First-Year Experience is a philosophy for providing an underlying basis for an educational reform movement and a response to a set of structural problems inherent in the organization of the collegiate first year; that is, problems that may have a negative impact on the learning, success, satisfaction, and retention of first-year students. This focus on the organizational structure of the first year is quite distinct from focusing on problems that may be associated with the individual characteristics that students bring with them to the college setting. Thirty years after America's campuses opened their doors widely to new students, it has become increasingly apparent that there is little we may be able to do to change some of the student characteristics which pose problems for higher educators. Instead, what we must focus on are those areas over which we have some direct and immediate control, namely the structures that are in place to support the education of first-year students.

The structural problems that lie in wait for students are many. At the top of the list is the fact that the teaching of undergraduate students, especially first-year students, is a relatively low status activity on many college and university campuses. Consequently, on many American campuses the "roles and rewards" of faculty are being re-examined. A distinguished American educator, the late Ernest Boyer, was successful in drawing attention to the "scholarship of teaching" from his position as President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. In that regard, he was joined by another high status agent for change, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE). In 1995-96 AAHE supported experiments altering those rewards on numerous campuses.

A similar and related structural problem is the fact that on many campuses, little opportunity exists for first-year students and faculty to interact outside the classroom because of (a) the lack of faculty rewards for such interaction, (b) faculty workloads, (c) class size, and (d) increasing reliance on part-time faculty for teaching first-year courses. Regardless of the causes of this difficulty, educational consequences seem to be

significant. One of the factors that has been frequently cited by retention scholars such as Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) and Astin (1993) is the tremendously significant role that faculty/student interaction outside the classroom plays in enhancing first-year student persistence and learning.

Another problem is the loss of a sense of community on college and university campuses, especially a vital caring campus community. This feature, in many respects, is directly due to the structure of campuses which is characterized by high levels of decentralization and resulting competition for students, faculty, and financial resources. The challenge to campus community may also be exacerbated by a lack of institutional consensus about the primary mission or missions of the institution. It is almost always compounded by the faculty's primary allegiance to the disciplines and not to a particular institution. Again, one of the most outspoken champions of the need for campus community was Ernest Boyer (1987, 1990). There are numerous illustrations within the first-year experience of campus based efforts to restore campus community, such as reinvigorating a common core curriculum, restoring rituals such as campus convocations, celebrations, and ceremonies.

The aspect of the campus which is clearly the greatest problem for first-year college students is the structure of instruction. First-year instruction is characterized by:

- Continued use of the lecture as the predominant mode of instruction
- Large classes taught by the least experienced instructors
- Infrequent testing
- Little personal feedback to students
- Infrequent writing
- Little opportunity for development of oral communication skills
- Inadequate attention to the development of critical thinking skills
- Focus on memorization of rote facts presented in superficial survey course
- Insufficient exposure to or use of the library
- Little or no depth of coverage in introductory survey courses
- Little or no connection of in-class to out-of-class learning experiences

By failing to improve the above characteristics of first-year instruction and community life, institutions are implicitly tolerating low rates of student success and retention.

Some common elements, adjustments, and changes have occurred to enhance first-year student learning, success, and retention. These features are often thought of as key dimensions of First-Year Experience programs. As indicated above, one ongoing aspect is the re-examination of faculty roles and rewards, particularly re-evaluation of the criteria for tenure and/or promotion in research universities. Simultaneously, in research universities, there is increased attention being paid in graduate schools to how we socialize future professors and how we provide explicit preparation experiences for them in the art and craft of college teaching. A classic example of this would be the initiatives begun by the American Association for Higher Education and currently being implemented at a number of research universities to train graduate teaching assistants in methods of college teaching. Given the fact that graduate teaching assistants are overwhelmingly involved in teaching first-year students, the impact of these programs on the quality of first-year instruction is obvious.

The most characteristic and pervasive modification that addresses many of the structural problems outlined above is the development of first-year seminars. This concept dates back to 1888 when the first non-credit first-year seminar was developed at Boston University. According to survey research conducted by the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, approximately 70% of American accredited undergraduate degree

granting institutions now offer first-year seminars. Many of these courses are especially designed to enhance student persistence. They are also designed to be directly at variance with the dominant structure for first-year instruction. That is to say, they do not predominately use the lecture mode. They are small classes that involve frequent testing, writing, and feedback to students; extensive opportunity for development of oral communication skills; more opportunity for development of critical thinking skills; little or no emphasis on memorization; extensive use of the library in the first semester; and an in-depth examination of that particular college or university. First-year seminars are also linked in many cases to institutional requirements for faculty training prior to performing this instruction. First-year seminars are also increasingly being linked to academic disciplines and to effective academic advisement by having the instructor of the freshman seminar also serve as the academic advisor for seminar participants.

Other current strategies designed to ameliorate the classic structural problems of the first year include the concept of linking or clustering first-year courses into learning communities or Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs). Students in a FIG take courses together and, in addition, attend weekly meetings with an upper-level undergraduate where they have a chance to process and question their new environment. This program generates a sense of familiarity and individual interaction that serves to empower and encourage first-year students to succeed. FIGs can provide a comfortable and stable frame of reference to new students, allowing them to explore and understand the newness of the academic world in the context of a familiar setting.

There are also numerous attempts to respond to the structural problems of traditional methods of integration (or lack thereof) by increasing expectations for writing, speaking, and critical thinking across the disciplines in the first year. Institutions, especially research universities, are making many efforts to increase the frequency of student-faculty contacts and relationships outside the classroom. This trend is being significantly enhanced by the use of technology, especially e-mail.

Other intentional changes and adjustments focus on institutional activities and structures outside the formal curriculum and the narrow confines of the traditional classroom. One major area of emphasis, for example, is the move to strengthen and require new student orientation and to increase simultaneously the amount of faculty involvement in all types of orientation activities. There has also been extensive experimentation with the creation of special academic and advising homes for first-year students such as undergraduate studies divisions and first-year, university, or general colleges.

Diane Strommer, who has done extensive work on the first-year college phenomenon, observes:

> At institutions with a freshman or university college, students are more likely to find services centralized with connections between and among orientation, advising, learning assistance, career services and the like, special populations of students are more likely to find their specific needs addressed, and all students find services in more different forms, from specialized advising to workshops and courses. (Strommer, 1993, p. 12)

The quality of life of the one and a half million on-campus residence students in the United States and its consequence for learning, persistence, and graduation are being investigated. An example of a major initiative to improve teaching and learning within residential settings is the re-creation of a colonial concept, the residential college. In their essay, Student Life as Text: Discovering Connections, Creating Community, Cornwell and Guarasci (1993) find that, "Residential colleges. . .have the potential to help students develop the ability to recognize and respect differences, to understand the roots and meaning of those differences, and most importantly, to work cooperatively with persons fundamentally different from themselves." As in the example of the FIG program, renewed interest in residential colleges signals the need for a community structure at the first-year level.

Another major trend in enhancing the first year of postsecondary study is the dramatic increase in the use of upper-level students as mentors, teachers, and advisors. This element of The

First-Year Experience is generally coupled with efforts to identify, recruit, train, and reward these cadres of outstanding upperclass role models. Included under the heading "Supplemental Instruction," student educators help to bridge the gap between entering students and their professors. Martin and Arendale (1993) articulate the indispensability of student mentors in terms of their ability to "help students to analyze their own learning" (p. 44). This serves to instill confidence in a system of learning in which students become capable of self-regulation and independent validation.

Most recently the rethinking of The First-Year Experience has been directed toward linking it, in some tangible way, with the senior year as the desired outcome of the collegiate experience. Again, the University of South Carolina has taken the leadership in this regard by hosting five national conferences on the topic of The Senior Year Experience. A related trend is the broadening of the definition of who is a new student to include another huge and much neglected population, transfer students. Many American institutions are redefining the previous categorization of new students to include not only first-time matriculants, but also transfer students. This redefinition acknowledges that transfer students have many similar needs for adaptation, adjustment, support, and acclimation as do first time matriculants.

Lessons Learned from the U. S. Experience

American academics, especially faculty, have spent an enormous amount of time and energy over the past 15 years thinking about the curriculum, particularly the vitality of general education. However, in addition to extensive tinkering with the curriculum, especially its content, much more needs to be done to make a real difference in learning, success, and retention in the first college year. No matter how much attention is paid to the curriculum, unless some of the major structural problems and obstacles to student success detailed above are addressed, substantial improvement in the quality of education will escape us.

It is certainly safe to state that another result of the past 15 years of reform has been the achievement of more "front-loading," exactly what the National Institute of Education (1984) called for in its report *Involvement in Learning*. There has certainly been greater intention, especially in research universities, to increase the resources directed to The First-Year Experience. Results from an annual survey of senior academic administrators on hundreds of American campuses, compiled by the American Council on Education's Vice President, Elaine L. El-Khawas and reported in *Campus Trends* (1995) indicate that, "Compared with a decade ago, however, the extent of the change is significant. ACE's 1985 survey found for example that only 37% had taken steps to improve the freshman year. Today, 78% are working to improve the freshman year" (p. 6).

Presidents and chief academic officers can and do make an enormous difference in the climate of receptivity for institutional change. Academic leaders can't do it single-handedly, but they certainly can legitimize and reallocate resources to facilitate improvement processes. While change and improvement do occur, they rarely seem to succeed when they are mandated. Positive directions seem to work best when initiated from the ranks of the faculty. Many institutions have developed faculty-dominated task forces on undergraduate life and The First-Year experience in order to facilitate change. There appears to be a great deal of altruism among the professoriate; large numbers of senior faculty seem to be very willing to become involved in these experimental activities, even though there is no hope of political and/or monetary reward for such participation. It is also very apparent that many of these initiatives can be successfully combined with faculty development programs, although there is no literature base yet available that would suggest these initiatives have actually resulted in the improvement of college teaching.

We can no longer assume that students arrive on college campuses knowing how to "do college." Institutions need to take responsibility for teaching students how to be successful. In that regard there is a significant body of empirically based literature, largely reported through the *Journal of The Freshman Year Experience* and the monograph series of the National Resource

Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, that freshman seminar courses do have significant positive outcomes for first-year student success.

At the same time, institutions are much more cognizant of the fact that the employees who work with, greet, and teach first-year students are critical. Institutions, in like manner, are accepting ever broadening areas of responsibility for providing a more holistic type of education well beyond the bounds of the traditional college classroom with its sole focus on academic learning and growth. Instead, it has become widely recognized that we are more likely to enhance the success of first-year students if we also pay attention to the other dimensions of growth and change during the college years.

Lack of money and other types of critical resources have not hindered many institutions from making improvements in the quality and success of that initial year of study. Institutions have always done and still can do anything they most want to do. It is really a question of whether or not the success of first-year students is a high institutional priority. If so, we invariably find the resources to make that happen to achieve our top priorities.

Immediate Trends of the '90s

Even though the recession is over in the U. S., it appears that there will be no return to business as usual. The support for public higher education that has been received from 1941 to 1990 is no longer assured. Similarly, the demand for greater accountability, assessment, and attention to the needs of undergraduate students, especially first-year students, is not going away.

Over the past decade there has been a shift away from "blaming the victim," that is, away from looking at student success, or lack of it, as primarily the result of underpreparedness. Instead, a growing pragmatism, especially evident in disciplines such as engineering and the physical sciences, seems to be taking over and encouraging more and more higher educators to rethink and alter the basic processes and structures that are created for first-year college students.

It is also apparent that there is going to be growing public demand for greater ease of articulation and transfer of students between the community college sector and the universities. In the United States, more and more senior institutions are dependent on the successful transfer process from the two-year to the four-year institution. Again, students arrive at an institution and find themselves not really first time matriculants but still new students. One of the most important trends of the '90s then is likely to be a focus more broadly and generically on students in transition. How can institutional structures and cultures be devised to be more accommodating of these students? This focus goes far beyond The First-Year Experience.

The Early Canadian Experience

The development of postsecondary education in Canada and its impact on the experience of first-year students was different from the U. S. pattern. This is most evidently the case in terms of the range or diversity of the system, including the responses to change, the intensity of The First-Year Experience movement and the critical mass or the sheer number of faculty and student services professionals involved. On the other hand, there were certain similarities in the basic structural conditions—demographic, economic, ideological (political, philosophical), pedagogical—giving rise to an interest in the first year of postsecondary education.

Historically, Canadian postsecondary education was elitist, clergy-controlled, classical or academic in content, male-dominated and teaching or instruction-oriented. This pattern is very similar to that outlined above for the U. S. The philosophy underpinning classic university education in Canada (because community colleges came later in response to the limitations of the traditional structures) also can best be described as academic social Darwinism. Once admitted, students were expected to cope, struggle, and compete for success in a tough, high-standard environment where only the fittest survive and where academic success and good grades were largely the responsibility of the individual student and not the institution. The institution maintained academic standards and quality and had faculty members interested in assessing the

extent to which the new aspirants to become "educated" or even "intellectual" met the challenge. Success was largely up to the students—the institutions simply kept score. The ethos was sink or swim. The university merely provided the water, context or opportunity for the competition and pronounced the winners and losers (the gatekeeping function). The winners were expected to become members of the country's intellectual and leadership elite and many did, in fact, follow this path and make significant contributions to Canadian society.

But things changed dramatically during the 1950s and '60s. Enrollments in postsecondary education (PSE) and resources dedicated to PSE increased greatly. The enrollment changes were so dramatic and continued, albeit at a slower pace in the '70s and '80s, such that Canada now has a PSE participation rate among the highest in the world. A number of factors were involved in the great expansion in enrollments following the Second World War. First, members of the armed forces returned to school. Second, demography played a major role in the 1960s as the post-war babies became 18-24 years old, the relevant age group for postsecondary attendance. Third, not only did the absolute size of the postsecondary cohort increase, but higher percentages of this expanded group were continuing on to PSE. Participation rates for women in particular increased greatly. Fourth, part-time enrollments increased even more than full-time enrollments. Fifth, community colleges, often seen as a route for working class students who were underrepresented at universities, were established as technical alternatives to, or prerequisites for, the university sector.

Another major change was that much greater emphasis was placed on the knowledge-creation function of universities, largely by the institutions themselves. Research grants and research productivity became the touchstones of the academic reward system. New faculty members had research degrees and an allegiance to their disciplines, expected to do research, write and publish their findings, and to be rewarded for these activities. And they were—the number and size of research grants and the number of scholarly publications, especially those in disciplinary-based refereed journals were taken as the best indicators of research productivity and therefore indicators of faculty members' contribution to new knowledge.

In the 1960s PSE became less elitist and more accessible; much less church-controlled and much more state funded; less traditional, classical, academic and more applied, practical, technical; less male-dominated and more gender-balanced at least in terms of enrollments and graduates; and finally, less concerned about research and more concerned with students. The expansion of Canadian postsecondary education and the growing research emphasis parallel the experience south of the border, but Canadian advanced education was still nowhere near as practical and pragmatic as in the U. S.

Two major educational philosophies fueled these changes, particularly the enrollment changes. First, an instrumental view of the relationship between education and economic growth prevailed. Countries having high rates of economic growth and development also had substantial investments in education, and this correlation did not go unnoticed by Canadian policy makers. This investment in human capital as opposed to other factors of production was expected to be instrumental in stimulating economic development. So the dedication of financial resources by the state to PSE was expected to pay off in terms of economic benefits. Second, for social justice and efficiency reasons there was a belief in accessibility, a democratization of education or equality of educational opportunity which fit very well with the instrumental view of education. If everyone had an equal chance to at least be in the competition for an advanced education then the system was fair and just. If all classes, genders, ethnic groups, urban/rural residents, etc. are in the competition and not excluded then there is some assurance that Canadian society's talent pool is being developed effectively and efficiently (the best and the brightest irrespective of background). The fact that what was considered just and fair was also considered economically efficient became a powerful justification or motivation for the expansion of PSE. The public investment in the research and development activities of universities was also viewed instrumentally for its anticipated payoff in terms of economic growth.

Universities and colleges were ambivalent about the expansion. On the one hand they were happy to have the enrollments and the financial resources that flowed from increased numbers. On the other hand concerns emerged over undergraduate preparedness, entrance standards, in short about the quality of this expanded cohort of students and about the impact this might have on the quality of education. There was also an emerging tension between the research and teaching functions.

What this laissez-faire growth period produced was relatively accessible but also relatively expensive postsecondary education, delivered in a fairly traditional fashion—the classic lecture format. But the real emphasis was on academic research, not what happens in the classroom. As in the U. S., teaching, and especially teaching first-year students, was/is a low status and unrewarded activity. Little opportunity exists for student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom and within the classroom first-year instruction is generally characterized by:

- Large lecture classes
- Instructors who are teaching assistants, sessional lecturers or new faculty
- Little personal contact and feedback
- Focus on memorization of content in broad survey courses
- Little emphasis on writing, higher-order thinking and oral communication skills
- Multiple choice testing
- Emphasis on grading not learning and student development
- Passive rather than active learning
- Little involvement and participation.

Student reaction to the first year of study in the 1960s was often one of bewilderment. Orientation consisted of hazing and humiliation. Students were told, "Look to your right and then to your left. One of you won't be with us after Christmas." Course and program selections frequently had more to do with parental than student aspirations, which were often vague and general or at least unformulated. Male instructors stood in front of classes and talked about issues and areas that were so arcane, obtuse, and removed from day-to-day student realities that the overwhelming reaction was one of chaos and confusion. Students more or less banded together to survive, but some did not. With sink or swim, there were some drownings. It was not that anyone was harsh or vicious—it was more benign than that. Students either coped, adjusted and got through, or were out. Marks, of course, dropped dramatically from high school, the pressure to succeed was substantial, and to compensate for the academic stress there was much drinking and partying. In fact, full year courses with large final exam weighting meant that social activities, friends, bridge and the like could consume a great deal of time before studying and essay production took over. It was essentially up to the individual, not the institution, to insure success.

And this climate illustrates the big difference between the Canadian and American experiences concerning the development of a First-Year Experience philosophy and set of programs. In Canada, the acceptance of institutional responsibility has been slower in emerging. The interest in The First-Year Experience is fragile and fledgling, it is definitely not a social movement, and to date there has been no comprehensive and coherent set of assumptions, practices and programs. The experience to date in Canada has been much less intentional, systematic, intense, varied and interwoven. However, some very encouraging developments have been revealed by the national survey and are described and discussed in subsequent chapters.

Recent Canadian Developments

Circumstances changed dramatically in the 1980s and early '90s. With a recessionary or sluggish economy, fewer jobs than graduates, and pressure for constraints or reductions in postsecondary funding, serious concerns emerged over the skills of postsecondary graduates and their employability and over the quality of postsecondary education and its

affordability. At the same time, while the number of 18-24 year olds declined, the participation rate of Canadian youth continued to increase, and older or nontraditional students enrolled in greater numbers than in the past. These trends exacerbated the pressure on the physical and human resources within the PSE system. More recently, government deficits and PSE restructuring, downsizing, or cutbacks have preoccupied the public debate about the future of the system. In fact, public expenditures on all social programs—health, education, and social assistance—and all government departments are under intense scrutiny for possible savings.

Along with external demands for public accountability, the postsecondary system is being asked to develop measures of not simply input, input rankings, or comparisons, but measures of output, outcome, or performance. Facing scarce and declining resources, administrative and policy interest has shifted to asking, "What knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behaviours are produced by public investments in postsecondary education?" and, in particular, "Which educational structures and processes best develop these characteristics?" Even provincial and federal auditors-general with an interest in "value for money" audits are interested in not only how much money is spent on PSE but what value or value-added is created in students' talents and abilities.

This interest in the assessment and evaluation of what works and what does not in terms of enhancing student outcomes, including employability outcomes, has often been regarded by faculty members as threatening university autonomy through a loss of control or through a centralization of power in the hands of governments. But this would only be the case if a heavy-handed, top-down, authoritarian approach (which has occurred in other countries) were adopted. If postsecondary institutions themselves developed indicators of the extent to which they were meeting their own missions, then institutional control, autonomy and authority would likely be enhanced. Postsecondary institutions would be in a position to say, "We have assessed and evaluated how well we are functioning, and here are some changes we are making to improve our effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity."

Canadian postsecondary institutions have been concerned with these kinds of issues lately and some have been conducting these kinds of assessments. Attrition represents a case in point. If many students enter PSE but then leave before completing a degree and most of this attrition is in the first year of study (as it is), then legitimate questions are raised about institutional effectiveness. With high enrollments, severe resource constraints and a lack of attention to teaching and instruction, concerns like this and the following ones have emerged, especially surrounding the transition, nature, and consequences of that first, important, formative period of postsecondary education:

- Why do so many students fail, dropout or transfer between institutions?
- Are students academically, vocationally, and socially prepared for PSE?
- What problems do students experience during the first year and with what consequences?
- Is there anything that institutions can do to enhance student success and development?
- What educational programs and processes lead to student retention, learning, satisfaction, and graduation?
- Which teaching and instructional practices are effective?
- What across-campus partnerships and collaborations facilitate student success?
- How can institutions adjust to increasing diversity in the student population - more women, minorities, adults, part-time students, etc.?
- How has an aging professoriate impacted on teaching/instruction?
- What impact has reduced public funding had on the quality of education?

- How should universities and colleges evaluate the extent to which they are meeting their institutional missions, in particular how well they are performing in terms of the education, development, and progress of new students?

Questions like these reveal three fundamental changes in the approach to PSE in Canada. First, students and their development have been brought back into the debate. Whereas previous attention and activities focused largely on the research function of universities, the current public policy issue concerns an overall re-thinking of undergraduate education but especially the first year. Second, there is increasing recognition among the postsecondary institutions themselves that they have some responsibility for insuring positive learning outcomes among their students. Acceptance of this responsibility has meant that, third, institutions are actively seeking to involve and integrate students into the scholarly community much more so than in the past. Such attention to the coherence and solidarity of a learning community is much more Durkheim than Darwin. The emphasis is gradually shifting from a "sink or swim" mentality, which blames the student for failing to survive in an unfamiliar setting, to providing students with the tools and support that are necessary for success in both college/university and life. Individual success, in turn, represents a contribution toward the collective functioning of Canadian society.

To date, the Canadian First-Year Experience, in terms of a philosophy, a concrete approach, and specific features, has been very different from the American experience. It has been a fledgling effort on the part of a few institutions in Canada having some contact with the National Resource Centre for the Freshman Year Experience at the University of South Carolina. The Canadian experience before the survey and this monograph as far as we could tell had no coherent focus or definition; was not systematic or structured; nor could it be characterized as a "movement" with specific intentions, goals, objectives, or purposes. The following chapters will identify and update the fundamental nature and dimensions of The First-Year Experience in Canadian postsecondary education and will develop the practical and policy implications of the findings.

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Chapter Two

Research on the First Year in Canadian Colleges and Technical Institutes

This chapter focuses on research describing the characteristics and experiences of first-year students in Canadian colleges and technical institutes. It represents a synthesis of the various reports received from survey respondents. As such, it should not be considered an exhaustive summary of research on the first-year student in Canadian colleges. Many institutions, for a variety of reasons, were unable to respond to our request for information. Some of these may have had valuable data to contribute.

Of the 57 respondents, 30 or 52.6%, indicated they examine the characteristics of their new students, and 24, or 42%, assess their first-year experiences. The reports submitted were largely descriptive in nature and focused on a wide range of topics related to the college transition. Some dealt with the experiences of students as they negotiated the admissions and registration "maze." Others concentrated on students' reasons for choosing, and their perceptions of, a particular college or institute. No one institution examines all elements of the first-year experience, and there is no multi-institutional database which examines all the issues.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Much of the research on the first year in Canadian colleges and technical institutes has focused on full-time students. While major differences between full-time and part-time learners are expected, the available data limits this discussion to full-time students only.

It is not useful to describe the "typical" or "average" college student. The heterogeneity of the student population (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986) makes the description of an average student meaningless, and doing so masks the complex nature of college students and their experiences. Each student enters college with his or her own unique social and academic background, skills, abilities, goals, aspirations, attitudes, and perceptions. Ignoring these differences fails to recognize a significant component of the first-year experience.

In addition, individual institutions may have several unique student groups depending on their geographic location, program offerings, and local economic context. Descriptions of averages can, therefore, be very misleading. Those who wish an overview of college student characteristics, however, may consult the publications of the Department of the Secretary of State (1987, 1992).

An alternative to profiling the "average" student is to create a system which captures student diversity with a manageable level of complexity. This would constitute a more accurate model of the real world and provide a meaningful tool for studying variation in college experience. The use of such a system could also help develop a better understanding of the complex

college student population, inform decisions regarding the many structures and functions of college services, and provide a comprehensive framework for further research.

A Typology of First-Year Students

While several schemes could be used to categorize students, an analysis of reports profiling first-year students suggests distinctions are often based on age and activity prior to college entry. Using these criteria, six main groups may be described.

- Students under 20 entering from high school
- Students under 20 entering from the work force
- Students between 20 and 24 entering from high school
- Students between 20 and 24 entering from the work force
- Students between 20 and 24 entering from other postsecondary institutions
- Students 25 and over entering from the work force

Each of these groups differs in numerous ways, and the identification of which traits are worthy of study is a major research issue. Some traits, like height, weight, and eye colour, may not influence the first-year experience. The rich literature on student success and retention (Dietsche, 1988, 1990; Pantages & Creedon, 1978; Tinto, 1987), however, can provide guidance in this area. Numerous studies have identified traits which influence academic performance and persistence—educational outcomes linked to the college experience (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Significant variables are age, gender, previous academic experience and behaviour, literacy and numeracy skills, confidence, certainty of career choice, finances, commitment to graduation, and commitment to the college of attendance.

A meaningful profile of college students, therefore, cannot be achieved by describing the "typical" student. The dynamics of the first-year experience, and educational outcomes more generally, may be understood only by utilizing a more complex model of college students which includes the traits described above. In doing so, we are forced to abandon our unidimensional view of students, the "one size fits all" perspective, and adopt a more realistic perception of who our first-year students are.

A first attempt at using a typology of first-year students draws largely on data from ten years of research on first-year students at Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, Etobicoke, Ontario. All information was derived from new student responses to a questionnaire administered in the first class. For illustrative purposes, the observed differences in two groups representing significant segments of the new student population are presented. To show their unique character, the groups are contrasted on variables identified via attrition research as important determinants of educational outcomes.

Students Under 20 Entering from High School (Direct-Entry)

Demographic Characteristics. The majority (58%) of students in this group were women, most (83%) born in Canada, with English (77%) as their first language. Most (74%) were living with their parents. A small number (7%) were in their own home or apartment or living in residence (13%).

Financial Concerns. Over half (53%) indicated they had no financial problems before starting college. Only 17% strongly agreed they needed help in this area, and only 12% agreed they might have to leave college due to financial difficulty. One-quarter said they were dependent upon financial aid to pay for their education.

Part-Time Work. Twenty-nine percent indicated they would not be working at a part-time job while studying in college. Forty percent indicated they would be working between 11-20 hours per week.

College Contact. Having entered from secondary school, many in this group had the benefit of exposure to college through the efforts of liaison

staff. One-quarter had attended information days or summer information sessions, and one-third had previewed their college program. Eighty-eight percent attended pre-registration orientation.

Academic Behaviour. One-half of this group reported they almost never or never skipped classes while in high school, and only one-quarter said they studied three or more nights per week.

Perceived Skill Needs. When asked to report on their academic skill development needs, direct-entry students were less likely to perceive a need. For example, 31% said they could greatly benefit from special help in developing their writing skills, and only 18% felt the same way about their reading skills.

Receptivity to Help. Overall, this group appeared to be reluctant to use college skills development services. For example, while 44% said they could benefit greatly from special help to improve study skills, only 30% indicated they were highly likely to use the service.

Confidence. The direct-entry group also appeared less confident than others in their ability to succeed in college. One-half strongly agreed they had the ability to be successful, and only 29% strongly agreed they were capable of a B+ or greater average.

Occupational Certainty. While this group had access to college liaison staff and a pre-entry college visit, many were uncertain about their occupational future. For example, only 22% strongly disagreed that they were not sure about their post-graduation work, and only 27% strongly agreed that they were sure. In addition, 48% strongly agreed they chose their program with a career in mind, and only 47% strongly agreed that their college program was related to their work after graduation.

Job Orientation. Job opportunities which occur during college studies can result in student departure. Many in the direct-entry group were open to this possibility. Only 44% percent strongly disagreed that if they had a chance for a full-time job they would leave college. Similarly, only 31% strongly agreed they would remain in college if offered a full-time job.

Educational Commitment. Those in the direct-entry group were firmly committed to graduating when they began their college career. Ninety-one per cent strongly agreed that completing their program was important.

Institutional Commitment. The direct-entry students appeared to be somewhat more critical of their college than other groups. Only 31% strongly disagreed that the college did not have high quality programs, and only 28% strongly agreed that college staff cared about helping students. Twenty-one percent strongly agreed that their faculty were excellent teachers, and 30% strongly agreed that the college itself was excellent.

Students 25 and Over Entering from the Work Force (Mature)

Demographic Characteristics. Fifty-six percent were male, 40% were born outside Canada, and three-quarters had English as their first language. While one in ten was living with parents, the majority (63%) lived in their own home or apartment.

Financial Concerns. Mature student responses in the area of finance suggest this group had high needs. Two-thirds had experienced financial problems prior to starting college, and 42% strongly agreed they needed help. Twenty-seven percent said they might have to leave college due to financial difficulty, and 59% were dependent on financial aid to pay for their education.

Part-Time Work. Forty-eight percent indicated they would not be working while studying. One-quarter said they would be working between 11 and 20 hours per week.

College Contact. Having been in the labour force prior to college, few in this group had the opportunity to obtain first-hand information before starting their postsecondary studies. Only 14% indicated they had attended a college information day or participated in a summer information session, and only one-quarter had previewed

their program prior to registration. Seventy-nine percent attended the college orientation day.

Academic Behaviour. In the area of academic skills the mature student group appeared better prepared. Fifty-nine percent indicated they almost never or never skipped classes in high school, and 46% studied three or more nights per week.

Perceived Skill Needs. High percentages of mature students said they could greatly benefit from college support in order to develop literacy skills (42%), math skills (32%), study habits (44%), test taking skills (44%), and library skills (37%).

Receptivity to Help. When mature students indicated a developmental need, they also said they were highly likely to accept college support to improve the skill. For example, 41% said they could benefit from special help in improving their writing skills, and 42% were highly likely to use the service if it was provided.

Confidence. In spite of their anxiety over academic skills, the majority of students in this group were confident in their eventual success. Fifty-eight percent strongly agreed they had the ability to succeed in college, 43% strongly agreed they were capable of a B+ average, and 63% were very certain to complete their program in the usual time.

Occupational Certainty. Perhaps because these students had substantial work experience, they were more certain about their occupational future than was the direct-entry group. For example, 37% strongly disagreed that they were not sure about their post-graduation work while 38% strongly agreed they were sure. In addition, 63% indicated they had chosen their program with a career in mind, and 61% strongly agreed their program was related to work after graduation.

Job Orientation. The occupational certainty of the mature students had additional benefits. Fewer in this group were susceptible to the pull of the external job market. Fifty-six percent strongly disagreed that if they had a chance for a full-time job they would leave college. Similarly, 42% strongly agreed that they would remain in college even if offered a full-time job.

Educational Commitment. Like the direct-entry group, mature students were firmly committed to graduating at the start of college. Ninety-one percent strongly agreed that it was important to complete their program, and 68% strongly disagreed that they might quit their studies before finishing.

Institutional Commitment. At entry, mature students tended to have more favourable perceptions of their college than those from secondary school. Forty-four percent strongly disagreed that their college did not have high quality programs, and 39% strongly agreed that college staff cared about helping students. Twenty-eight percent strongly agreed that the college faculty were excellent teachers, and 38% strongly agreed that the college itself was excellent.

Overall, students entering college directly from high school were Canadian-born females living with their parents and, perhaps for this reason, were less concerned about financing their education. Approximately one in three had on-site contact with their college prior to orientation or registration. This group tended to have weak study and class attendance habits, did not perceive a need for the development of their literacy, numeracy and learning skills, was not receptive to college developmental services, and tended to lack confidence in college success. While direct-entry students were firmly committed to graduating, they were uncertain about the nature of their future occupation, the relevance of their program to this future, and were more receptive to leaving college for full-time employment. As a group, direct-entry students also tended to be somewhat critical of their college at the beginning of their first year.

Mature students were quite different. Overall, the majority were males living in their own home or apartment and dependent upon financial aid to pay for their education. Almost one-half were not born in Canada, and few had the opportunity to visit their college prior to entry.

The group had strong study and class attendance habits, perceived a need to improve their literacy, numeracy, and learning skills, and were very receptive to the corresponding college support services. They were also confident in their ability to do well and be successful.

The majority of mature students were sure about the nature of their future occupation, chose their program with this career in mind, and were not open to leaving college if offered a full-time job. Consistent with their goal-oriented nature, mature students were strongly committed to graduating from college. As a group, they tended to perceive their college positively at the beginning of the first year.

These profiles illustrate how two groups of students can possess dramatically different characteristics as they begin their college careers. Similarly, profiles of other student groups in the typology can be developed, each showing a unique set of differences. Two important observations may be made. First, the experience of college in the first year will vary considerably depending on the characteristics of students at entry. Those who have clear educational goals and see their program as directly related to these goals, for example, will differ in their college experience from students who enter with little direction. Second, the traditional description of the "typical" or "average" college student masks these differences and discourages study of the differences in typology

THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

For heuristic purposes the first-year college experience has been divided into two time periods. The first encompasses college and program selection, registration, and the start of classes. Student experiences at this time primarily involve making decisions about the direction of their college career and interacting with college staff and administrative procedures.

The second period constitutes the remainder of the year. During this time the student must become integrated into the academic and social environments of the college or institute. It is a time for making friends and "making the grade." Based on their experiences, students begin to evaluate whether or not they "fit" their particular college. This is essentially a cost-benefit analysis (Tinto, 1975), and the outcome can precipitate a variety of decisions such as changing program, transferring to another college, switching from full- to part-time studies, or leaving postsecondary education altogether.

Experience at Entry

Starting college can be stressful. Students must deal with the multitude of tasks related to college and program selection, registration, parking permit and photo i.d., buying textbooks, and becoming familiar with the campus and locating classrooms. In completing these tasks, students are forced to negotiate the maze of administrative procedures and interact with college staff.

College and Program Selection

Students' reasons for choosing to attend a specific college were relatively consistent across jurisdictions represented by research reports. Variation in the relative importance of reasons depended on the amount of choice students had. The first criterion in selecting a college, of course, was program availability. Students chose a college that offered the program they were interested in. If the student lived in a location where there was only one college, then proximity to the institution became the second most important reason.

When students had a choice of colleges to attend, such as the Metro Toronto campus, reputational factors became more important than location. For example, a survey of seven area colleges (Central Region Research Network, 1995) found that students cited the reputation of the program (57%) and college (43%) as very important reasons for choosing their college. Only 35% said that proximity to home was very important. Similar results were obtained in a survey of Quebec CEGEPs (Clabrough, 1995).

The criteria used by new students to choose a program are less clear due to the relative paucity of research. While only three studies examined this issue (Conestoga College, 1994; Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 1994; Sault

College, 1995), the results were consistent. Career interest and salaries were the top two reasons given.

Program choice is, of course, dependent upon students' goals for the future. In college systems where career preparation and pre-university programs are both offered, choices will be made in accordance with plans for university attendance. Some students, however, are undecided about their future and see college as a place to try out various options. One study (Dietsche, 1991) reported that 37% of new students said they could benefit greatly from help in selecting a career, and 52% said they were attending college to help decide on a career. Interviews with students in a CEGEP (Cornell, Cornell, & Dickie, 1990) confirmed these data. As one student said:

> I was thinking about changing at some point. My ambition later on is to possibly go into law and if you're in pure and applied it's kind of going in the wrong direction, so I'm thinking of changing to social at some point, but I don't know when and if.

Many first-year student surveys collected data on how prospective students obtained information about their college and program. By far the most frequent sources were various college publications and events such as calendars, program brochures, and campus visits. The second most frequent source was word of mouth, presumably reputational information. Individuals providing this input varied depending on the prior activity of the student. For older students entering college from the work force, friends, college graduates, and co-workers were the most frequent sources. For direct-entry students, the most frequent sources were friends, high school guidance staff, and current and former college students.

One study (Cornell et al., 1990) examined the information provided to prospective college students by high school teachers and friends already in college. The results showed that teachers and counsellors presented an image of tough, uncaring college teachers and used this image to motivate their students to work harder and more independently. From friends in college, students heard that college was fun. Their focus was on the social, not the academic world. Classes were not compulsory, there were many free periods, and entertainment was constantly available in the student pub or games room. Conflicting messages indeed leave the new student wondering whom to believe. Additional evidence from this study suggested that friends were more believable.

Opportunities to obtain first-hand information on the nature of college are often not available to prospective students. In two colleges (Centennial, 1994; Conestoga, 1994) it was found that only one-third had met and talked with a teacher in their program prior to beginning classes. Some colleges, however, are attempting to remedy this by providing a concrete experience of college through "audit days." In one college (Humber, 1995), high school students meet with college staff and faculty and participate in an actual or simulated class related to their area of interest. The value of this activity was well evidenced by one student who said, "I now know how to choose the right program, know the admission requirements, and what it would be like to attend Humber."

Customer Service

A customer-service philosophy has not been a tradition in postsecondary education. As a result, entering college can be one of life's most frustrating experiences. In addition to the anxiety and uncertainty, there are the ubiquitous queues and hurried staff. Recently, colleges, perhaps recognizing the importance of reputational information in college choice, have been attempting to implement a customer service orientation. This usually consists of streamlining processes such as registration, financial aid, and textbook purchases to minimize waiting, and promoting staff customer service skills.

The anxiety and uncertainty at entry to college is often associated with a lack of information. One study (University College of the Cariboo, 1994), reported new students found "not knowing who to ask" (38%), "not knowing where to go to find things" (37%), and "not understanding the administrative structure" (who is responsible for what) (35%) to be the hardest parts of adjusting

to college administrative rules. Consistent with this, another study (Central Region Research Network, 1995) reported students encountered some or many problems obtaining information over the telephone (39%) and finding their way around the college (32%).

Administrative rules and procedures can complicate matters immensely. For example, when course registration is organized on a first-come-first-served basis, some students are unable to obtain the courses they need because the courses are full. In one study, 24% of those who required student financial assistance became ineligible as a result of their reduced course load. Many said they would have to postpone their studies or work full- or part-time.

Accessing college services can also be problematic. In a survey of seven Metro Toronto colleges (Central Region Research Network, 1995), roughly one in two new students indicated that buying texts and materials (51%) and applying for financial aid (44%) presented some or many problems. In another study, 66% of new students were able to get all of the required texts. However, 27% could only get "most" and 3% said they could get "few" of the texts they needed. Textbook shortages are not uncommon occurrences in college bookstores.

Meeting with college staff to deal with problems can also require a great deal of patience. One college reported that 42% of students had to wait more than a week to meet with a counsellor and 30% had to wait the same length of time time to see an academic advisor. When asked about line-ups for services within the context of government cutbacks and increased enrollments, only 6% of new students said they had not experienced a line-up (Cox, Khan, & Mastrandrea, 1994). Of those who had, 20% said they were tolerant of queues, 26% were impatient, 39% thought there was room for improvement, and 6% found them totally unacceptable.

Even when staff are finally contacted, appropriate information may not be forthcoming. Student comments from one study were revealing: "She gave me the wrong courses accidentally which caused me to have to take a year off and come back," and "I find that one academic advisor tells me one thing and another one will tell me the exact opposite." One-third of students who met with an advisor found it to be "only a little helpful."

Interestingly, few new student surveys assessed the customer service skills of their staff. Of those who did (Cox, Khan, & Mastrandrea, 1994; Dietsche, 1991; University College of the Cariboo, 1994), 55% of students in one college found staff to be "welcoming and helpful" while 40% were neutral. In another college, 47% of students found staff to be "very helpful and knowledgeable," 31% thought they were "somewhat helpful and knowledgeable" and 13% rated them as "extremely helpful and knowledgeable." A third study found that 76% of students agreed that "staff care about helping students with their problems."

While a customer service philosophy has not been a tradition in postsecondary education, more work is being done to promote this value in college staff. A typical quote from one student, however, indicates that a substantial performance gap exists: "The blonde woman behind [the] counselling department desk is a rude insensitive bitch." Improvements in this area can only benefit first-year students as they negotiate the stressful transition to college.

First-Year Experiences

Once the whirlwind of registration is over, first-year students enter a crucial time. They must create a new identity, one centred on the college and their place in it. The first four to six weeks are critical to establishing this identity: a sense of who they are and a feeling of comfort in their new environment.

Whether entering college from secondary school, the work force, or the home, first-year students have been uprooted from one personal and social context and thrust into another unique, foreign environment. New roots have to be grown. This environment has two major components: the academic sphere and the social sphere (Tinto, 1975). Interactions within the academic sphere—made up of courses, classes, texts, and tests—contribute to students' sense of self as competent and successful individuals.

Interactions with peers and college staff—the social sphere—contribute to students' sense of comfort and belonging. Experiences in both areas influence, to a significant degree, the path each student takes through college.

The Academic Sphere

Major elements of the academic sphere are students' perceptions of their program and courses, study and class attendance habits, and performance on tests and assignments. Overall, for most first-year students these constitute the core of the college experience. And this is especially true in commuter institutions (Dietsche, 1991).

Perception of Program and Courses. New students' attitudes regarding their program when entering college are generally positive. Results from two colleges (Centennial College, 1994; Conestoga College, 1994) showed that over half the students were "looking forward to an exciting career," two-thirds were "ready to get started," and 40% were "confident of success." Another study (Dietsche, 1991) found 48% of students strongly agreed that they "had chosen their program with a career in mind" and that their program was "related to work after graduation."

One study (Dietsche, 1991) reported on attitudes of students regarding their program after two months in college. The majority agreed their program was exciting (73%), that topics covered were important for their future success (87%), and that it was providing them with skills for the future (89%). In another study (University College of the Cariboo, 1994), new students were asked to evaluate their courses at mid-semester by indicating whether all, most, some, or none met a variety of criteria. Almost one-half of the students indicated that in all of their courses there was good opportunity to ask questions (46%), instructors were available outside class (46%), and the grading system was fair (44%). Fewer said all classes were stimulating and interesting (21%), that the classroom atmosphere was conducive to learning (22%), or that tests were useful (22%).

Academic Performance. Many first-year students enter college concerned about their academic ability. In one study (Conestoga College, 1994), 43% of new students said they were worried about their academic performance; and, indeed, this concern is not misplaced. Two reports (Central Region Research Network, 1995; University College of the Cariboo, 1994) showed that later in the year, 50% of students found handling the academic workload to be problematic. In one college (Conestoga, 1994), 57% of new students reported the workload was heavy while one-third said it was light. Part of this assessment, no doubt, depends on other commitments a student may have. For example, 65% of first-year Metro Toronto college students said they had some or many problems balancing the college workload with other responsibilities such as family and part-time work.

The importance of grades in determining students' feelings about college was well documented in one report (Cornell et al., 1990). When asked to indicate a high point in their first term, most students said, "when I got back that test and I had done really well." Similarly, a low point frequently cited was receiving a failed assignment. For most students, good marks are the only reward for hard work. Success early in the year helps them shape a new identity as a competent and successful individual.

Academic Behaviour. Critical to the attainment of good grades are the academic behaviours of studying, attending classes, and completing assignments on time. Students' expectations regarding studying were examined in one college (Conestoga College, 1994). At entry, 20% indicated they would study 4-9 hours per week, 45% said they would spend 10-15 hours, and 27% expected to study 16-20 hours. In another college (Dietsche, 1991), the largest number of students (34%) reported they studied 1-2 nights per week, and 32% studied 3-4 nights. There was also considerable variation by age: Mature students (25 years and over) studied more than younger students.

Students who enter college directly from secondary school report a dramatic change in their freedom to choose what they do. Their challenge is to survive the freedom from the constraints of high school long enough to mature into the freedom to choose to be responsible

(Cornell et al., 1990). This freedom is expressed most frequently in choosing to attend class. As one student noted, "You can miss class. So it's tempting to miss class. So I did that for a while. Then it got me into trouble. I didn't do it as a way to fail, but I would just take advantage of it."

The frequency of skipping classes was examined in one college (Dietsche, 1991) where the largest percentage of students (32%) reported they "almost never" skipped and 20% "never" skipped. Twelve percent missed class once per week or more, and 21% were absent 2-3 times per month. Mature students skipped classes much less frequently than younger students.

Detailed interviews with new students (Cornell et al., 1990) identified a list of obstacles to attending class for those entering college from high school. These were (a) believing that teachers don't care if students attend, (b) long breaks between classes, (c) long classes, (d) boring classes, and (e) attractions and distractions of competing social activities. The adjustments required in making the transition to college can be critical to the success or failure of the first-year student.

The Social Sphere

First-year student experience in the social sphere is critical to the development of a sense of belonging—a feeling of being comfortable and connected in college. This social integration (Tinto, 1975) is the product of interactions with other students, faculty, counsellors, registrarial staff, secretaries in divisional offices, and other college personnel.

Friendships. Beginning college is a time for making new friends. Friends help students survive, succeed, and enjoy their time at college. Students value the advice of other students: tricks for getting into courses after they have been closed, which teachers to avoid, where to buy second-hand texts, and whom to see with a particular problem. When asked to indicate how long it took to get used to college, one student replied, "I'd say that I started really making friends in my program, let's say, after three weeks, two and a half to three weeks. You start to loosen up, you know. I guess the school is kind of intimidating if you don't know somebody in your program." It is also easier to make friends in programs and courses that encourage close working relationships (Cornell et al., 1990).

Generally, students do not have difficulty in establishing relationships with their peers. In a survey of seven large Metro Toronto colleges (Central Region Research Network, 1995), only 14% of new students said they had problems making friends. A comprehensive study of peer interactions found 9% of students had difficulty making friends while 75% indicated they had become friends with other students (Dietsche, 1991). In addition, 87% said their new friendships were enjoyable. The supportive role of friends was also examined. Eighty-five percent of new students said others were willing to help them with problems, and 63% agreed that other students had influenced their career goals.

As in other areas, the nature of peer interactions varied with age. Those over 25 years interacted less with other students. For example, while one-third of students under 25 years strongly agreed they had made friends with other students, only 15% of mature students did so (Dietsche, 1991). Similarly, only 22% of mature students strongly agreed that their student friendships were enjoyable compared to 34% of younger students. This variation, presumably, is the result of differences in attitudes, interests, and behaviour which characterize mature students.

Contact With Faculty. Interactions with faculty are also an important component of the college experience (Tinto, 1975). While these occur both inside and outside the classroom, it is the latter which are most often considered part of the social sphere. Only three studies reported on student relationships with faculty. The Metro Toronto college survey (Central Region Research Network, 1995) found that 22% of new students had some or many problems getting acquainted with teachers. In one college (Dietsche, 1991), 34% of students had never interacted with faculty outside the classroom after being in college for two months. The largest percentage (51%) had such interactions one to four times.

The nature of student involvement with faculty was also explored. One-half of the students

agreed they had developed a good relationship with at least one faculty member (Dietsche, 1991). In addition, many agreed their interactions with faculty had influenced their personal growth (42%), intellectual growth (37%), and career goals (35%).

Interactions with faculty also vary according to the type of student. Those entering college directly from high school find their relationships with their teachers change significantly. In college, students feel themselves to be on a more equal footing with faculty. They like the sense of equality engendered by being permitted to call their teachers by their first name (Cornell et al., 1990). This change was captured by one student who said, "In high school, it was sort of, 'I'm the teacher, you're the student,' and here it is a one-to-one basis, 'I'm a person, you're a person,' sort of thing. We're equivalents."

Mature students appear to interact with faculty more often than younger students (Dietsche, 1991). While 36% of those under 25 years had never met with faculty outside of class by mid-semester, only 20% of the 25-and-over group had not done so. In addition, while 14% of the younger students said they interacted with faculty more than five times, one-quarter of mature students had. The reasons for these differences have not been explored but may be due to the social skills, the attitudes of mature students, and the smaller age difference between faculty and older students.

Extra-Curricular Activities. Many colleges provide extensive opportunities for students to be involved in extra-curricular activities. The assumptions underlying this practice are that students involved in college life are more likely to succeed, and that college life should be "well rounded." Options range from formal activities such as student government, special clubs, and varsity sports to informal opportunities such as exercise facilities, games rooms, and pubs.

Several studies examine first-year student participation in extra-curricular activities. When asked upon entry to college, many new students expressed a desire to be involved (Conestoga College, 1994). Approximately one-third of new students said they would like to participate in sports (37%), clubs (33%), and study groups (32%) while in college. Only 20% indicated they did not want to be involved in anything.

Another study, however, suggests that attitudes later in the term may change (Central Region Research Network, 1995). At mid-semester, 39% of students said that getting involved with student activities was not important. This may be due to an initial focus on academic concerns and difficulty finding the time. The latter is suggested by the fact that of those students who thought involvement was important, 33% reported they had some or many problems in doing so.

Actual rates of participation in extra-curricular activities further suggest that, at least initially, first-year students find it difficult to be involved. One college (University College of the Cariboo, 1994) found 60% of respondents to a mid-semester survey did not participate in recreational programs. Similar results were obtained in another college (Dietsche, 1991); but, in addition, a difference in participation between formal and informal activities was observed. After two months in college the vast majority of students indicated they had never participated in formal activities such as clubs (93%), religious, cultural, or ethnic groups (96%), and varsity sports (85%). Much lower rates of non-participation, however, were reported for informal activities such as frequenting the pub or games room (36%), and engaging in informal athletic events with friends (73%). While no study examined the reasons for low participation rates in formal extra-curricular activities, a combination of being unaware of their existence, not knowing how to join, being reluctant to join due to the intimidating new environment, or simply not having the time may account for the phenomenon.

Use of College Services

As time passes, friends are made and test results received, first-year students begin to "learn the ropes" of college life. Most come to see themselves as part of their new environment, understand the academic demands and their own capabilities, and develop coping strategies. Examples of these strategies are (a) seeking help

from friends or siblings, (b) dropping a course when they run into trouble, (c) learning to schedule their work, (d) deciding when it's more valuable to miss a class than to attend, (e) and taking advantage of services provided by the college (Cornell et al., 1990).

Most colleges provide a wide range of services designed to help new students cope with the transition to postsecondary education. Generally, efforts are made to communicate the existence and substance of these services, usually at orientation, in the hope that they will be used when students perceive the need. Few colleges, however, monitor the effectiveness of their efforts.

Two studies reported on students' use of college services during the first term. One (University College of the Cariboo, 1994) found that large numbers of students had never heard of some services and knew of others, but never used them. Those which had the highest rates of use were academic advising, financial aid, computer labs, and the library. On the other hand, over 80% of respondents had never used career planning workshops, stress management and test anxiety workshops, study skills and time management workshops, or personal counselling.

A second study (Dietsche, 1991) assessed service use two months after college entry. Similar results were obtained. Over 80% of respondents had never used personal or career counselling services, language or math development centres, or peer tutoring services. Those which had the highest rates of use were the library (80%) and academic advising (22%). While neither study examined the reasons for these low rates of service use, data from the first suggest that a lack of information plays a role.

SOURCES OF VARIATION IN THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE

Every college or technical institute constitutes a unique learning environment made up of the facilities, the people who work there, the types of programs offered, and the students who take them. The nature of the postsecondary experience is the product of an interaction; it is influenced both by the characteristics of the student and those of the institution. Variations in either set of characteristics and interactions between critical components constitute major determinants of the first-year experience.

One study examined variation in first-year student experience (Dietsche, 1991) from which two examples are drawn. The first contrasts the experiences of mature students from the work force with those entering college directly from high school. A second example shows how experience varies as a function of educational outcomes.

Type of Student

Differences in the college experiences of mature and direct-entry students occurred in both the academic and social spheres. Differences were also exhibited in the use of college services and student attitudes toward their program and college.

Mature Work Force versus Direct-Entry Students

At mid-semester, mature students perceived their program more positively than direct-entry students. Eighty-three percent of the older group agreed that they found their program exciting compared to 68% of the younger group. Likewise, while 14% of direct-entry students agreed that most of the information being discussed in their program was dull, only 6% of mature students thought so. In addition, 95% of the mature group agreed their program was providing them with skills for the future, and 47% strongly disagreed that most of what they were learning was irrelevant. The comparable figures for the direct-entry group were 87% and 23%, respectively.

The overall attitude of the two groups toward their program also differed. At mid-semester, 73% of the younger students disagreed with the statement, "I've begun to think the program I'm taking is not what I want," whereas 88% of mature students disagreed.

The involvement of the two groups in the academic sphere also differed. As measured by academic behaviour, the mature group was

more involved. Almost one-half of the older students (44%) reported studying five to six nights or more per week compared to 15% of the younger group. In addition, greater numbers of mature students indicated they were studying more in college than in high school. Compared to the above figures, 16% of mature students studied five to six nights or more as high school students while only 4% of direct entry students reported the same behaviour.

Similar results were obtained for the two groups when examining frequency of class absenteeism and homework completion. In college, mature students skipped classes less often and completed homework assignments on time more often than direct-entry students. In addition, the older group increased their frequency of class attendance and homework completion in college, compared to high school, to a greater degree than direct-entry students.

The academic performance of the two groups also differed. Based on self-report, which has been found to be accurate for students with high grades, 42% of mature students reported a mid-semester program average over 79%. Only 19% of direct-entry students reported a similar achievement. Official college grade reports were consistent with these findings.

The social experience of college also seems to be different for mature students entering college from the work force compared to those students beginning college directly after high school. Data from one college (Dietsche, 1991) indicated mature students had more interaction with faculty, less with other students, and were less likely to frequent social meeting places such as the pub or games room.

For example, 80% of the mature group had met with faculty at least once outside the classroom, and 63% had developed a good relationship with a faculty member. Comparable figures for the direct-entry group were 59% and 47%, respectively. In addition, more older students agreed that faculty had influenced their intellectual (46%) and personal growth (51%) compared to younger students (34% and 38%). In comparison, more younger (34%) than older students (15%) agreed they had become friends with other students and that these friendships were enjoyable (34% vs. 22%). The younger students were more likely to agree that their peers were willing to help with problems (35% vs. 26%).

Overall, involvement in extra-curricular activities was low in the first two months of college. Differences between the two groups, however, were observed. Younger students exhibited greater participation in the pub or games room (67% vs. 44%) and informal athletic activities (28% vs. 20%). Older students, on the other hand, were more involved in course associations (22% vs. 15%). Older students were also more involved with the college as measured by their use of services. The largest differences were observed in the use of academic advising (34% vs. 17%), the library (89% vs. 78%), and peer tutoring (17% vs. 7%). Smaller differences were also seen in the use of personal and career counselling and the language development centre.

Astin (1984) has argued that differences in students' involvement in college can influence decisions regarding persistence and departure. This was substantiated with data from Humber College (Dietsche, 1991). When students' attitudes about their program and college were examined, mature and direct-entry students differed dramatically. For example, more younger (17%) than older (7%) students said they thought about transferring to another college or considered dropping out (25% vs. 14%). In addition, fewer direct entry students (56%) strongly agreed they would continue in their program compared to mature students (65%).

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Implicit in the study of college first-year experiences is the goal of increasing overall rates of student success and retention. In doing so, the efficiency and effectiveness of college education can be improved. Achieving these goals, however, begins with an analysis of those experiences associated with first-year educational outcomes such as academic success and persistence.

A number of studies examined, in various ways, the differences between persisters and

dropouts. Using an *ex post facto* telephone interview method, one study (Red River, 1992) found the major reason for leaving college to be a lack of personal preparation. Students said they were not prepared for the workload, had time management problems, or decided they were not in the right program. Similarly, program choice played a role in student success and persistence in another college (Conestoga College, 1994). Students enrolled in their second-or third-choice program were less likely to be successful and more likely to withdraw than those in their first-choice program.

The role of background factors in student departure was explored using an *ex post facto* survey method (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, 1993). In this study, non-completers were more likely to be disabled or married females of aboriginal ancestry with dependent children. They were more frequently employed and worked more hours. They had lower educational achievement, were less certain about their career choice, and were lower in educational commitment. In college, however, they used counselling, tutorial help, and library facilities more frequently than completers.

While many studies have attempted to identify differences between successful and unsuccessful students, or persisters and dropouts, a new approach has been recommended. This method defines first-year outcome groups in terms of academic performance and registration status. With each variable expressed in a binary form (success vs. failure; persistence vs. withdrawal), it is possible to examine four types of student outcomes. These are (a) academically successful persisters (SPS), (b) academically successful leavers (SLV), (c) academically unsuccessful persisters (UPS), and (d) academically unsuccessful leavers (ULV).

Research of this type has been ongoing at Humber College for the past ten years. The data presented in Table 1 are derived from major studies of the 1986 and 1991 freshman cohorts. Information on the background characteristics, college experiences, and changes in attitudes and behaviour was gathered and analyzed for the four groups identified above. The discussion which follows describes the complex, dynamic interaction between student characteristics, college experiences, and educational outcomes. Table 1 shows student characteristics at entry, first-term experiences, changes in attitude and behaviour, and the consequences for each outcome group.

Academic Success and Persistence versus Departure

Previous research (Dietsche, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, Tinto, 1975) has shown that academically successful students can choose to either persist or leave their college of attendance. What factors influence the choice made by students?

Background Characteristics

At entry to college, students who were successful and persisted differed little from those who were successful but eventually left. Both groups began with a strong academic background, language skills, and confidence in success. Major differences were the uncertainty of the departure group regarding their future career and their greater receptivity to leaving college for a full-time job.

College Experiences

Differences between students at college entry can have significant implications for the first year. And while the experience of college is as diverse as the individuals who attend, an analysis based on educational outcomes disclosed several patterns. Generally, it was found that variation in key entry characteristics can lead to different college experiences and, consequently, different educational outcomes.

For example, an examination of first-term experiences showed that leavers, despite being similar to persisters in their high level of social and academic involvement, were less positive about their program at mid-term. Fewer said their program was exciting and more agreed that what they were learning was irrelevant. Further analysis confirmed that uncertainty about future goals and directions, as exhibited by the departure group at college entry, significantly influences students' perceptions of their program.

Table 1
First-Year Outcomes and Student Success

Student Characteristics	First-Year Outcome			
	Success and Persistence	Success and Departure	Failure and Persistence	Failure and Departure
Background and Entry				
Age	21.4	22.5	20	21
Gender	female	male/female	male/female	male
SES	2nd highest	highest	2nd lowest	lowest
First Language English	79%	79%	72%	82%
Birth Country Canada	60%	56%	33%	64%
Prior Activity	work	work	high school	work
High School Program	advanced	advanced	general	general
High School Involvement	highest	2nd highest	2nd lowest	lowest
Language Skill	2nd highest	highest	2nd lowest	lowest
Occupational Certainty	highest	lowest	2nd highest	2nd lowest
Orientation to Job	lowest*	highest	lowest*	2nd highest
Confidence in Success	highest	2nd highest	2nd lowest	lowest
Experience				
Perception of Program	highest	2nd lowest	2nd highest	lowest
Academic Involvement	highest	2nd highest	2nd lowest	lowest
Interaction with Peers	highest*	2nd highest	highest*	lowest
Interaction with Faculty	highest	2nd highest	2nd lowest	lowest
Use of College Services	2nd lowest	lowest	2nd highest	highest
Term Changes				
Academic Involvement	largest increase	2nd largest increase	no change	no change
Receptivity: Learning Skills	no change	no change	increase	decline
Occupational Certainty	no change	2nd largest decline	no change	largest decline
Value of Education	no change	2nd largest decline	increase	largest decline
Orientation to Job	no change	2nd largest increase	small increase	largest increase
Confidence in Success	no change	2nd largest decline	small decline	largest decline
Impact				
Educational Commitment	no change	largest decline	no change	2nd largest decline
Institutional Commitment	small decline	largest decline	small decline	2nd largest decline
Intent to Change	lowest	2nd highest	2nd lowest	highest

* Indicates tied position

Changes in Behaviour and Attitudes

Students' experiences in the first year will have an impact on their behaviour in college and their attitudes toward college education. By collecting information on new student attitudes and behaviour at entry and at mid-term, insights into the factors which precipitate student decisions to change program, change college, or leave postsecondary education can be obtained.

In the Humber study, the attitudes of new students toward their future career (occupational certainty), leaving college for a full-time job (job orientation), the value of their college studies (value of education), and their confidence in success were measured. Alterations in academic behaviour (studying, doing homework) between high school and college were also examined. In all of these areas significant mid-term group differences and changes over time were observed.

By midterm, the attitudes of the departure group had changed dramatically. In spite of their academic success, they were now more uncertain about their career choices, less confident in their success, perceived their education as less valuable and were more inclined to say they would leave college for a full-time job than when they began their studies. In contrast, the persister group exhibited no change in any of these areas.

Impact on Students

These data illustrate how students who differ at college entry have diverse experiences resulting in attitudinal and behavioural changes over time. While the specific sequence of these events has yet to be determined, additional data showed the impact of these changes. It is clear that students' experiences over the first year influence their attitudes and, ultimately, their behaviour.

Specifically, different outcome groups exhibited dramatic changes in their attitudes toward continuing their college education or remaining at their college of attendance. These changes constitute the attitudinal antecedents of strategies used by students to cope with negative experiences in college include changing programs, changing colleges, or dropping out. Many of these intentions were evident in students at midterm.

For example, commitment to both education and college of attendance decreased in leavers while their desire to change programs, colleges, or to drop out entirely was high. And, indeed, this is what the departure group did. The persisters, on the other hand, remained committed to both their education and college and were lowest in the intent to change category.

Failure and Persistence Versus Failure and Departure

At entry to college, these two groups were alike in their weak language skills and lack of confidence in success. Major differences were observed, however, in the persisters' higher level of occupational certainty and lower receptivity to leaving college for a full-time job compared to the departure group.

College experience differed in that the persisters perceived their program positively and were involved with peers, whereas the leavers were low in peer interaction and had less positive perceptions of their program. Dramatic differences were also observed in attitudes. At mid-term, the persister group valued a college education highest, were highly certain about their future career, and confident in their success. Those who left, in comparison, were low in all these areas.

Entry to mid-term changes in attitudes also differentiated the groups. The leavers became more uncertain about their future career, perceived a college education to have less value than when they entered, were much less confident in their success, and were more receptive to leaving college for a job.

In addition, their commitment to education and their college decreased. The persister group, on the other hand, was quite different. They were as certain about their future career at mid-term, perceived college education as having more value, and were only slightly less confident in their success. There was no change in their commitment to

education, only a small decline in their commitment to their college, and their intention to change program, change college, or drop out was low.

Summary

The foregoing comparison of students who persist with those who leave college, irrespective of whether they are academically successful or not, illuminates the sequence of events leading to departure. It is clear that certain student characteristics at college entry, including occupational certainty, can lead to negative experiences which cause students to question their educational goals and directions and, in some cases, precipitate decisions to change colleges or to depart from postsecondary education altogether.

Research on First-Year Outcomes

The survey questionnaire asked respondents to indicate whether their institution measured outcomes of the first year such as increased knowledge and skills, values, satisfaction, and retention. Overall, 47% said that they did. In the vast majority of cases the measures consisted of pass/fail and retention/withdrawal rates for a course or program. Several colleges also examined the attitudes of students either during or at the end of the first year through satisfaction surveys. In some cases, analyses were conducted to establish relationships, if any, between demographic variables and first-year outcomes.

There appeared to be only one instance (South Winnipeg Technical Center) where comprehensive assessment of student competencies is conducted at the end of mostly one-year programs. This is no doubt due to the fact that this is a most difficult type of research. The technical and adminstrative problems are many and the absence of standardized measurement tools necessitates a considerable financial investment in their development. More attention, however, needs to be paid to this activity.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has focused on the nature of the college student, the college experience, and educational outcomes. Clearly these factors interact, albeit in complex ways, and define a "college education." From this, several conclusions may be drawn.

Student Diversity and Educational Delivery

Given the diversity of the entering student population, the traditional "one size fits all" type of college education is ineffective and inefficient. A basic principle of systems theory is that only diversity can absorb diversity (Ashby, 1965). In the context of higher education, this means that students who differ in critical entry characteristics, both cognitive and non-cognitive, must be presented with different learning environments. A unidimensional and inflexible delivery of college education will result in some students being successful and others not. (Dietsche, 1995).

This, of course, has generally been the philosophy of higher education, and failure or departure have in fact been held up as criteria of quality and hallmarks of high standards. Not long ago, the dean's warning to freshmen at orientation was, "Look to your left and to your right, a year from now only one of you will still be here."

Educational Philosophy: From Darwin to Durkheim

A "Darwinian" philosophy of education suggests that only the "fit" will survive. That is, only those who happen to possess the particular set of traits which "fit" the institution and its style of education. Those students who have "the right stuff" will be successful and graduate. Those who don't, fall by the wayside. Implicit in this philosophy is the idea that students have more to do with their achievement than the educational institution. And research has generally shown this to be true (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Higher education administrators, however, have exhibited a curious inconsistency in this regard. While they readily ascribe the cause of failure to the student in the first year, they are keen to credit the institution because it has taught a powerful lesson to those students who graduate.

A new philosophy of higher education is required and has begun to emerge. The basic

assumptions are exemplified by the theory of Durkheim who emphasized the importance of respect for the individual and interdependence in maintaining social cohesion (Durkheim, 1964). The implications for college education are that attention must be paid to the non-intellective as well as the intellective needs and characteristics of individual students in creating learning environments. In addition, the social as well as the academic experiences of students are critical determinants of educational outcomes.

Customer Service and Quality Education

The concept of customer service is also taking hold in higher education. While some fear this will make higher education more like business, others see a need to be more business-like. In a fundamental way, customer service values are simply an expression of Durkheim's arguments in another form. Being mindful of, and responding to, customers' needs, desires, and attitudes contributes in a significant way to the success of a business. In college education, success is defined as students completing programs and graduating. Paying attention to who our students are, their experiences in the first year and continually trying to deliver stimulating, supportive learning environments that meet their particular needs will undoubtedly improve the quality of higher education.

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Chapter Three

Programs and Services for First-Year Students in Canadian Colleges and Technical Institutes

Chapter Two summarized research on the college first-year experience and suggested how student entry characteristics can result in diverse experiences that influence educational outcomes. It was concluded that to improve student success and persistence, colleges need to deliver diverse learning environments able to match an incompletely specified critical set of student traits, abilities, attitudes and behaviours. To achieve this diversity, postsecondary institutions should implement a range of support programs and services which, in concert with academic programs, create stimulating environments promoting the personal, social, and intellectual growth of students.

This chapter summarizes information on programs and services designed to help new students adjust to college studies. The 58 institutions responding to the survey provided details on the structure and function of these services. Data included whether student participation was voluntary or compulsory, the nature of the target group, when the service was provided, whether academic credit was awarded for participation, responsibility for organization and delivery, cost to students, and service evaluation procedures.

In addition, this chapter presents information on the institutional climate in which these programs and services are provided. Respondents were asked to reply to "climate" measures such as: degree of student involvement in the provision of services; barriers and obstacles to program implementation; program and service cancellations; and collaborative effort in program/service delivery. These data have much to say about what remains to be accomplished in order to improve the first year for college students.

Overview of Programs and Services

Overall, considerable variation was observed between institutions in how programs and services were organized and delivered. As it is impossible to describe this diversity completely in this publication, only the most common features of first-year programs and services will be presented.

Table 1 summarizes the incidence of various programs and services examined by the survey questionnaire and reveals that most institutions provide a wide range of support programs to first-year students. One would be hard pressed to argue that little effort was being made to accommodate student needs and provide many learning environments. Certainly, everyone would agree that the array represents a significant commitment of money and human talent.

The great majority of colleges and technical institutes delivered services (liaison, articulation, orientation) designed to recruit and integrate new students. Similarly, more than eight in ten had programs matching students' entry-level basic skills with course content and difficulty

(skills assessment, course placement). By these measures, it would seem that almost all colleges adhere to a "right to succeed" philosophy and try to make sure that new students "get off on the right foot."

The prevalence of short-term "success seminars," academic advising, and career and personal counselling services indicates a commitment to supporting the student during his or her college career. In addition, almost three-quarters of the institutions offered basic skills development centres, and many provided specialized programs targeted to specific groups or subsets of students.

On the other hand, only about one-third of respondents indicated they offered a "College 101/100" course or an introductory-level discipline course incorporating "first-year principles." And

Table 1
College Programs and Services Offered (N = 58)

Type of Program, Service, Centre	Institutions Offering (%)	Institutions Not Offering (%)	Total Responses (%)
Articulation/Liaison	92	8	50
Orientation	95	5	58
Family Involvement	48	52	52
Equity Access	79	21	47
Aboriginal Student Services	66	34	47
Race/Ethnic/Cultural	62	38	45
Gender	49	51	43
Course Placement	89	11	53
Skills Assessment	86	14	51
Academic Advising	98	2	58
Language Development	71	29	49
Mathematics Development	75	25	52
Learning Skills Centre	73	27	48
Short-term Success Seminar	94	6	53
University 101 Term Course	39	61	41
Introductory Course	34	66	47
Course Cluster Formation	51	49	43
Student Cohort Formation	41	59	37
Peer Tutoring	85	15	47
Career Counselling	98	2	56
Personal Counselling	98	2	54
Faculty Development	88	12	52
Residence Life	47	53	45

only about one-half of respondents said their college attempted to facilitate student cohort/course cluster formation. These relatively low frequencies probably reflect characteristics of the institutional climate and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Common Features of First-Year Programs and Services

While information on how first-year programs and services were organized and delivered showed considerable variation, certain common traits prevailed. However, the frequent absence of detailed, comparable program and service evaluation data made it impossible to identify an optimum or "best" structure and function. Though such conclusions await further investigation, the following results provide a broad survey of possibilities.

Liaison/Articulation Prior to Admission

High school visits, open houses, career days and college audits most often involved voluntary student participation. The targets of liaison activities were prospective students, wherever they might be found, and also included parents, guidance staff, and the general public. The majority did not provide the student with academic credit. Those that did were the result of articulation agreements between educational institutions.

While liaison programs occurred throughout the year, there was a concentration of activity in the fall and early spring. Most of the events were free to students, tended to last from two to three hours, and were under the jurisdiction of the registrar or a marketing/liaison office. Student services also held the portfolio quite frequently. Service delivery was accomplished by various personnel including liaison officers, student affairs or admissions officers, and student ambassadors. Several colleges created liaison teams comprised of academics, student services personnel, support staff, and senior students. While the majority (56%) of institutions reported they evaluated their liaison and articulation activities, the most common measure was attendance with a few colleges using satisfaction surveys.

Orientation

In two-thirds of colleges and technical institutes, attending orientation was voluntary. When compulsory, it was the academic component, not the social, and occurred in specific programs. Target audiences were most often new students, but in some cases also involved all students, parents, and the public. Three in four colleges oriented students in August and January, at the start of each semester. Timing and duration varied considerably. Some oriented a week prior to classes, others within the first few weeks of classes. Orientation could be two hours long, a whole day, or two hours per week for the first eight weeks.

Introducing new students to college was most often overseen by student services staff. A few colleges developed a team or committee structure which included student services personnel, faculty, student life, and student association members. While student services, student affairs staff, and counsellors most often delivered the program, many orientations included faculty, administrators, and members of student government.

Few institutions charged students for their orientation, and if they did, it was usually for the purchase of a text which accompanied an orientation course. Only half the colleges evaluated their orientation program, and most did so using attendance figures and student evaluations.

Family Involvement

Family involvement usually occurred during orientation and, infrequently, in a mature student club when a new student's parent/spouse/partner was encouraged to attend. Participation was always voluntary, and no college awarded credit for the activity.

This program was usually administered by student services or the counselling office, but in some colleges was within the jurisdiction of public relations/marketing. Delivery was carried out by orientation staff, a fee was seldom levied, and a formal evaluation process was rare. When it did occur, it usually took the form of a survey, attendance figures, or an annual report.

Equity Access Programs

Equity access programs most often targeted special needs students whose participation was voluntary. Mature students were also a focus in a few colleges. Academic credit was rarely awarded on the basis of participation but usually occurred within the context of a specialized academic program. Equity activities normally ran all year long, were organized by student services personnel, and delivered by special needs staff. In the case of academic programs, responsibility lay with the senior academic officer and delivery was carried out by program faculty.

Fee for service was not common, except in the case of academic programs when normal tuition fees applied. The most common evaluation process was the annual report or an annual program evaluation.

Aboriginal Student Programs

Services targeted to aboriginal students varied from native student clubs to aboriginal counselling services and centres to specialized academic programs. In the former cases, participation was voluntary and no credit was awarded, while in the latter it was compulsory and students received program credit. All services were offered during the entire academic year.

Responsibility for aboriginal services normally fell to student services, but in the case of academic programs was within the jurisdiction of academic services. The programs were delivered at no cost to the student, except where tuition fees applied, and the courses were most often directed by staff from a Native Program Unit and counsellors who, in some colleges, were native. Program evaluation occurred in half of the colleges and usually took the form of student grades or an evaluation report.

Race/Ethnic/Cultural Programs

These depended on voluntary student involvement and most often consisted of an intercultural/multicultural centre, intercultural counsellor, clubs, student organizations, or campus events celebrating specific cultural groups. Generally, all students were encouraged to participate in these programs and services which ran throughout the academic year. No credit was awarded for participation, and no student fee was charged. Most often such programs were under the jurisdiction of student services or a combination of student life, counselling, and student association staff. Delivery was accomplished by the same personnel.

Gender Programs

Programs with a focus on gender usually consisted of specific events encouraging the voluntary participation of all students such as short-term discrimination/harassment or educational equity workshops. Others, like Women's Studies, a Women's Resource Centre, and programs designed to encourage the participation of females in non-traditional occupations, were targeted specifically to women and ran the entire year. Academic credit was normally awarded for participation in academic programs or courses such as Women's Studies.

Faculty and academic services were responsible for academic programming while student services, counselling, or an Educational Equity Office planned and delivered the non-academic services. All were free to the participating student except for applicable tuition fees in the case of an academic program. Evaluation of services rarely occurred, and grades constituted the most common tool used to evaluate academic programs.

Course Placement/Assessment

Assessment of literacy, numeracy, and learning skills occurred most frequently within the context of English and math course placement. In the majority of colleges assessment testing was compulsory, involved all new students, and took place in August prior to the start of classes. In almost all cases assessment did not result in academic credit for the student. When this did occur, credit was usually in the form of a course exemption.

The administrative responsibility for assessment/placement was evenly distributed in the colleges among registrars, student services, and

academic services. Delivery was most often the responsibility of discipline faculty (English, French, Mathematics), but in numerous cases involved a co-operative effort between student services staff, faculty, and learning/test centre personnel.

In the majority of colleges testing was free to the student. In other cases costs ranged from $2 to $50 depending on the type of test (e.g., TOEFL). This service was most often evaluated by examining student grades.

Academic Advising

Academic advising programs ranged from voluntary drop-in centres to compulsory courses (e.g., advising seminar) which were part of a program. Only in the latter instance was credit awarded for the activity. For students in some colleges use of advising services was compulsory at college entry and voluntary thereafter. In all colleges, the service was available to students throughout the academic year.

Academic advising services were most frequently within the jurisdiction of student services or counselling. In other cases (e.g., CEGEPs), the function was the responsibility of the registrar or academic services area. Advising was most often provided by student services or counselling staff. In a few colleges, an integrated team of counsellors, faculty academic advisors, and admissions officers was used. In no case was the use of advising associated with a fee, and in the majority of colleges no formal evaluation of the service was conducted.

Language/Math Development

Language/math development services were generally of two types: drop-in learning, writing, language (English, French), and math centres; and academic programs such as English as a second language, adult basic education, and academic upgrading. In the former case, student participation was voluntary and resulted in no academic credit, while in the latter, participation was compulsory and carried the normal course credit. In the majority of instances, "at-risk" students were the target of these programs, but in many colleges, programs and services were available to all students throughout the academic year.

Responsibility for language development usually lay with an academic program or academic services. Delivery was carried out by program or English/math department faculty and, in some cases, Learning Centre staff including student tutors. Use of the service was free to the student unless it was part of a program, in which case the usual tuition fee applied. These programs were most commonly evaluated according to student performance.

Learning Skills Centre

Learning centre services were available to all students throughout the academic year and were generally utilized on a voluntary basis. Service use, however, was sometimes compulsory for those having academic difficulty. Normally, no credit was awarded for learning centre use unless it was a compulsory component of a credited course.

Learning centres were usually the responsibility of academic services or those in charge of developmental programs. Service delivery was most often carried out by program and department faculty and in some cases peer tutors as well. Voluntary use of the learning centre was free to the student unless it was a part of a course or program in which case tuition fees applied. Service evaluation was achieved through student performance assessment.

Success Seminars

"Strategies for success," "empowerment workshops," and success/study skills workshops and seminars were generally utilized by students on a voluntary basis. These services were provided most frequently to all students but were also targeted to first-year and high-risk/failing students. In the latter case participation might become compulsory when individual faculty scheduled a study skills workshop in their class. Academic credit was awarded only when the workshop or seminar comprised a course or part of a program.

These services, generally provided throughout the year, were often co-ordinated with a

"common hour" when all students were free of classes, but were also provided in many colleges prior to or at the start of each term. Seminar length varied from one session of one hour to four sessions of four hours each over the course of the first year. In most colleges, these workshops/seminars were organized and delivered by student services or counselling personnel. In a small number of colleges, counsellors, faculty, learning centre staff and peer tutors were utilized as a team. Generally, there was no cost to the students unless they were required to purchase a text. Most institutions did not evaluate these services, but when they did the most common tool was a student survey.

University/College 101 Course

The majority of these courses were compulsory and were offered in conjunction with specific programs. They were often open to all students, but were sometimes targeted to specific groups such as "at-risk" or "undecided" students. The courses were usually 45 hours long and as a result, academic credit was almost always awarded. Some colleges offered the courses only in the first semester while in others they were available in all terms.

Responsibility was usually held by academic administration or a particular academic division or program. In several colleges these courses were the joint responsibility of academic and student services personnel. Delivery was most often carried out by faculty but in many cases resulted from the combined efforts of faculty, counsellors and learning centre staff.

When part of a program, costs included tuition and texts, otherwise there was no student fee. The most frequent forms of evaluation reported were course grades and course evaluations.

Discipline/Survey Course

Discipline-based survey courses incorporating first-year concepts generally occurred within the context of specific programs and for this reason were compulsory for students. First-year students were usually targeted and participation resulted in academic credit. Such courses were most often 45 hours in duration, were offered in the first term and were within the jurisdiction of academic services. Course delivery was carried out by faculty. In most colleges, such courses carried tuition fees and were evaluated using student grades.

Course Cluster Formation

Course cluster formation occurred in colleges as a specific program strategy. Many college programs were structured to encourage the integration of new students, the group to whom this service was most often targeted. Responsibility was ordinarily held by academic services or program chairs, and participation almost always resulted in academic credit. Delivery was always accomplished by faculty and program evaluation usually involved evaluating student grades.

Student Cohort Formation

This usually occurred as a component of an academic program and resulted in compulsory student participation. Cohort formation via special interest clubs and associations, however, was based on voluntary participation. These services were sometimes targeted to certain new student groups ("at-risk," mature students) and involved programs which provided academic credit. More frequently though, cohort formation depended on student interest in specific topics (photography, computers, business student association). Participation normally occurred throughout the year on a variable basis from twice per term to weekly.

Responsibility for these services was split between academic services for program-based associations and student services for special interest clubs. Delivery involved personnel from student services, athletics, faculty, counselling and student associations. In most colleges, participation was free to students, and evaluation was rarely a part of the program design.

Peer Tutoring

Student participation in college peer tutoring programs was on a voluntary basis when students chose to become tutors, but could become compulsory when required to be tutees. Generally available throughout the academic year, the

service was open to all students but some colleges focused on those who were "at risk." In addition, the "best" students were usually recruited as tutors. While those who used tutoring services did not obtain academic credit, students who performed the tutoring often did.

Student services was most often responsible for the organization of peer tutoring but in some colleges this was handled collaboratively by faculty, counsellors, student life staff, and student government. Service delivery was, by definition, carried out by students but often also involved faculty, counsellors and special needs personnel. Fee for service was uncommon in the college sample, but when present, varied from $1 to $5 per hour. Many colleges evaluated their peer tutoring service by means of student grades and satisfaction surveys.

Career Counselling

In the college sample, career counselling was provided throughout the academic year to all students on a voluntary basis. Academic credit was not common and only occurred in programs which included a career component such as co-op.

The responsibility for organizing career guidance lay with student services or counselling services in almost all colleges. In a few cases organization was the combined responsibility of counsellors, academic advisors, and career centre staff. Service delivery was accomplished by counsellors or student services staff in the majority of colleges and was free to students. Infrequent exceptions involved covering the cost of any necessary tests.

Personal Counselling

Personal counselling was available to all students throughout the academic year on a voluntary basis. Exceptions occurred in cases of extreme deviant behaviour when service use might become compulsory. Academic credit was never awarded for student participation.

Responsibility for service organization and delivery was almost exclusively within the jurisdiction of student services or counselling. In no college did students have to pay for personal counselling, and in most no formal evaluation of the service was conducted. When evaluation did occur it most frequently took the form of a satisfaction survey.

Faculty/Teaching Development

In most colleges professional development was a voluntary activity for all except "probationary" faculty. Such programs were available to all faculty, however, and in some cases resulted in course credits which could lead to increased certification. While these programs were available all year long, there tended to be a concentration of activity in the May-June period in many colleges.

Responsibility for faculty development was almost always with the Vice President, Academic, but in a number of colleges was within the jurisdiction of Human Resources. Program delivery was most frequently accomplished by faculty or a professional development officer. A number of colleges also relied on external consultants.

Faculty usually did not have to pay to participate in development activities or in some cases only did so if they failed to complete the course successfully. Many colleges evaluated their professional development activities and most often did so with a survey, course grades, or an annual report.

Residence Life

Student participation in residence life programs was voluntary and no credit was awarded for this activity in any college. Targeted to residence students, these programs most often ran throughout the academic year. They were usually organized by student services and delivered by residence staff who, in some cases, included student dons. Residence life activities were available at no cost to the student, apart from residence fees. About half the colleges evaluated their programs via a student survey or annual report.

Institutional Climate

The design, development, and implementation of student support programs and services is

greatly affected by organizational culture and climate. What is possible in one college may be impossible in another. The survey asked respondents to comment on their institutional climate measured in four ways: student association involvement in first-year student integration; barriers or obstacles to implementing new programs and services; first-year programs and services which had been cancelled; inter-departmental collaboration in support of first-year development. A summary of responses to each of these measures is presented in the next section.

Student Association Involvement

Respondents were asked to rate student association involvement in integrating new students (5 point scale). The majority (52%) of colleges responded in the highest two involvement categories with a mean of 3.4. Thus, while student associations were involved in the integration of new students in many colleges, the mean suggests "moderate" involvement overall.

The nature of student involvement varied from college to college. In some cases associations only participated in delivery and not planning. In others, involvement occurred at all levels including financing the services. Student volunteers most frequently engaged in orientation activities and in programs providing a student handbook/survival guide and social activities in an effort to integrate new students. Less frequently, students in some colleges financed and delivered peer tutoring services, a peer advising/buddy system, and awareness campaigns (AIDS, alcohol, sexually transmitted diseases).

Barriers and Obstacles to Implementation

Almost two-thirds (65%) of the sample indicated they experienced barriers or obstacles in implementing first-year programs or services. The nature of these barriers fell into three main categories: resource, attitudinal, structural. The most prevalent obstacle was resources, both financial and human. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the sample indicated budget cutbacks coupled with increased enrollment made innovation extremely difficult. In addition, some institutions reported difficulty in locating qualified personnel.

Attitudinal barriers were of two types. Forty percent of colleges indicating they faced barriers to new services suggested that faculty attitudes were a major problem. There was resistance to any activity perceived to be "non-academic," that is, outside the mainstream curriculum of the program or institution. This attitude seemed to take two forms. In one instance there was the view that colleges had no room for "superfluous" programs and services such as counselling, career guidance, and study skills workshops. Another was the view that support or "remedial" programs constituted "babysitting" students; they preferred a "sink or swim" (Darwinian) approach which was believed to develop independence and self-reliance. Many respondents also cited a general resistance to change as a barrier to innovation.

In part, these attitudes appeared to stem from a frustration on the part of faculty in dealing with past financial cutbacks. Cuts have often been achieved via curriculum "downsizing," reducing the number of instructional hours in a program. As a result, faculty feel even more pressure to cover the material considered necessary to produce competent graduates, and any activity which takes away from instructional time is perceived negatively.

Students themselves constituted the second attitudinal barrier. Although not cited as frequently, almost one-quarter (23%) of the respondents reported that many students enter college with the attitude that they don't need help, that many support programs are basically "remedial" and are therefore "not for them." Some experience with college is required before they change their minds.

Structural barriers to program development were of two types. One type was the decentralized administrative structure common to many colleges. This meant that implementing an innovation college-wide was impossible since the locus of control for change was at the program level. Indeed, this phenomenon is exemplified by the current survey data. Respondents often indicated that a particular innovation was unique to a program or cluster and did not characterize the total college. Another variation of this barrier was geographic decentralization. In

this case, multi-campus colleges encountered similar difficulties in creating change across the whole college.

A second type of structural barrier reported was the absence of efficient and effective information systems which could be used to maintain student records, track change over time, and provide opportunities for intervention. A number of colleges indicated they could not implement various student success programs because they did not possess the required information. Within the context of fiscal constraint and the high cost of human resources, such systems could be of benefit in improving student success and persistence.

Program and Service Cancellations

Almost one-half (47%) of the college sample reported they had cancelled a first-year program or service. The types of services cancelled ranged from study skills/college 101 courses, to orientation activities, learning/tutoring centres, student success seminars, student success committees, cultural activities and preparatory courses. Reasons for cancellations paralleled those discussed above. Many resulted from budget cuts while others derived from a loss of commitment or philosophical differences between committee members. In one case, student apathy led to the ending of a program.

Collaborative Effort

Two-thirds of respondents indicated their institution was involved in a collaborative effort between units, departments, and disciplines to support first-year development. Most often collaboration was related to admissions and new student orientation involving registrarial staff, student services personnel, and program faculty. The second most frequent form of collaboration was the provision of student success services or programs. This often consisted of diversified representation on success committees and, less frequently, faculty-student services cooperation in the delivery of peer tutoring.

There were only two instances of collaboration between faculty and student services staff in the development and delivery of an academic program. This reflects the "two solitudes" organization of academic and student services. On many campuses student service initiatives take place outside the academic sphere. Services are delivered to students apart from academic program content and involve little collaboration between staff from each area.

Observations and Conclusions

The common features of first-year programs and services at Canadian colleges and technical institutes reveal several consistent themes. These are

- How programs and services are delivered to new students
- The nature of collaboration in the design, development, and delivery of first-year programs
- The absence of program and service evaluation

Passive versus Active/Intrusive Delivery

This chapter has shown that colleges provide a wide range of programs and services designed to promote first-year student success. Many students enter college, however, uncertain about their goals and the nature of college life. The transition can be chaotic and confusing. Completing registration, finding classrooms, purchasing texts, and making friends fill the early days with activity. Thoughts of the support services and programs that are available, where they are located, and whether they should be used are usually not prominent.

As the results of this survey demonstrate, colleges generally offer their programs and services in a "passive" mode. That is, students access the services on a voluntary basis. Most often a program is created, space is provided, staff are allocated, and clients are awaited. With this passive model of delivery, students must identify a need for themselves, the corresponding college service, its location and hours of operation, and then act on this information by "dropping-in." It is not surprising, therefore, that, as was shown in Chapter 2, few new students use college services in the first semester.

An alternative is the "active/intrusive" model of service delivery. The model can be implemented in two ways. The first approach is to include services as part of an academic program. This is an effective strategy when targeting a specific student group (e.g., mature, at-risk) but is not viable with the general population of first-year students. For this group a second approach is required which provides an opportunity for students to identify their own perceived needs. The college can then respond with individualized information on the corresponding support services and programs. Such systems can be computer-managed and effectively and efficiently match student entry characteristics with college support services. The product is diverse learning environments, matching a diverse student population.

Integrated Model of Service Delivery

While the survey results show the occurrence of collaborative models in service delivery, the incidence was quite low and tended to be restricted to admissions and orientation. In most colleges the traditional split between student and academic services is clearly present. Usually, the academic sector is responsible for the design and delivery of programs and courses intended to promote intellectual growth, while student services deals with "the rest of the student." In addition, those in the academic sector who favour the "Darwinian" approach to higher education see the student services mandate as suspect. This does nothing to encourage cooperation and collaboration.

Since the majority of a student's time on campus is spent in the academic world of lectures, labs and libraries, the service sphere is somewhat outside the "mainstream" college experience. When faculty are unaware of and/or uninterested in the support service component of college life, educational effort is divided and the potential for synergy is lost. In this model, college staff are not working together to effectively promote first-year student success and persistence, and, as a result, first-year students are often burdened with the task of negotiating between two very different types of experience. The alternative is to encourage and reward collaboration between academic and student support personnel. This does not mean that all academic programs must have a support component, something that might be vigorously resisted by faculty. All that is required is a cooperative approach to the delivery of both the academic and student support components of college education. In this way the total college becomes organized around the goal of promoting student growth.

Evaluation of Services

The majority of colleges in this survey did not evaluate their programs and services. When evaluation did occur it was often limited to attendance figures and satisfaction surveys. While such measures provide valuable information, they are insufficient when attempting to document program/service effectiveness. The identification of what works and what doesn't requires the design and implementation of evaluation studies providing accurate, comparable data on the impact of first-year programs and services. As is evident from the survey results, considerably more work is required. Only in this way can we gain a better understanding of college students, the college experience and how to move "from best intentions to best practices."

Chapter Four

The First-Year Experience in Canadian Universities

Each year, tens of thousands of students enter Canadian universities for the first time. How do they remember their university experiences? A few may recall the thrill of that first good mark or the time in that philosophy seminar when things suddenly made sense. Some will remember the good friends they made and wonder where they are now. Others will recollect the time they partied too hard and spent the night in the de-tox centre. Many will fondly remember their university days as among the best they ever had.

For others it will be different. They will recall the long lines at registration and not being able to get into that important course. They will think of how out of place they felt and how sure they were that their professors would eventually find them out. They will remember how tough it was to get the reading done and essays in on time, the anonymity of the place, and being worried about making ends meet.

Whatever the case, by the end of the first year, most would have made a reasonable adaptation to university life. A few would have excelled. A minority would have decided that the university in which they started really was not for them, and that they should try elsewhere. Still others may have come to the conclusion that they should quit school and get a job.

This chapter is primarily about the experiences of students in their late teens, navigating through The First-Year Experience at a Canadian university, and the results of those experiences. It will examine why students go to university, and what happens to them when they get there. It will focus on experiences, such as the possibility of a hassle free registration, that may be desirable objectives in themselves, and others, including getting along well with faculty, that may contribute to good marks, intellectual development, and retention in the university. The latter are sometimes referred to as "outcomes."

Obviously, it is in everyone's interest to improve both types of experience. However, policies designed with this end in mind will only bear fruit if they are based on a firm understanding of student life. University policies aimed at the success of first-year students that have been designed with this end in mind will be examined in a later chapter.

Information on experiences and outcomes will come from students themselves, primarily through the vehicle of surveys carried out on several campuses. The results of focus group meetings with students at various times in the first year, administrative records kept by universities, and diaries kept by students in residence, will also contribute to our understanding of the Canadian First-Year Experience. Information obtained from sources such as these will be presented in a way that follows first-year students over the course of The First-Year Experience.

Who Goes To University?

In 1994, students entering the University of Calgary, King's College at the University of Western Ontario, the University of Toronto, Nipissing University, Ryerson Polytechnic University, the University of Guelph, and Brock University all filled out the same questionnaire, distributed by the Student Environment Group at the University of Guelph, in which they were asked various questions related to their high school experiences, backgrounds, aspirations, and so on. While confidentiality of the data makes it impossible to present survey results for individual universities, information on the seven institutions is included in the Appendix. Although data collected in this fashion cannot be used to typify all Canadian universities, they represent the largest single block of detailed information available on students entering Canadian universities. In this and subsequent sections, these institutions will be referred to collectively as "The Group of Seven." Data from these and other universities suggest considerable socio-economic and racial diversity within and between different environments.

Information on the family incomes of students entering the Group of Seven are surprising to say the least. Twenty three percent come from families where the annual income is less than $30,000. A further 26% come from families in which it is estimated that parental income is between $30,000 and $49,999, and those whose parents earn from $50,000 to $74,999 make up 26% of first-year students. The parents of the remaining 25% earn $75,000 or more. A study conducted at York University in 1994 indicated that 47% of the families of first-year students in the faculties of arts and both pure and applied science (approximately 80% of all first-year enrollments) earned less than $50,000 per year (Grayson, 1994c).

When it comes to education, 52% of the fathers and 45% of the mothers of students entering the Group of Seven had a college or university education. At Dalhousie University, 49% of students in a first-year survey conducted in February, 1988 said that either their mother or father attended university (Christie, 1988). By way of comparison, at York University, only 24% of fathers and 16% of mothers of students entering in 1993 and 1994 had a completed college or university degree (Grayson, 1994a).

In view of the relatively low socio-economic status of the families of many students, it is no wonder that finding money for educational expenses is a major concern. In fact, among the families of students entering Group of Seven universities, 40% had started to save for university before the beginning of high school. At the University of Manitoba, 67% of first-year students had either some, or major, concerns about financing (University of Manitoba, Sept. 1991). In a retrospective study of second year students at Queen's University carried out in 1990, 29% of males and 32% of females said that finances had been a point of concern during the course of the first year (Knox, 1991).

First-year students at the University of Guelph were also concerned with how they were going to finance their studies but, not surprisingly, the amount of worry varied by socio-economic status. For example, while 66% of students from low income families were worried about money, the figure for those from high income families was only 36%. Similarly, among students who defined their origins as lower class, 68% had money worries, whereas only 33% of self-defined upper class students were concerned with finances (Gilbert & Auger, 1988a). Despite findings such as these, 50% of students entering the Group of Seven in 1994 believed that students should pay for their university education themselves.

In recent years, increasing numbers of non-Whites from developing nations have immigrated to Canada. It is not surprising, therefore, that only 65% of students entering the Group of Seven considered themselves White. Nineteen percent defined themselves as East Asian, 6% as South Asian, 3% as South East Asian, 1% as North American Indian, 2% as Black, and 4% as "other." Information on other universities, such as the University of Victoria and York University, suggests quite a range of difference in the racial composition of first-year students. At the University of Victoria (1992), a survey revealed that 90% of entering students considered themselves White. A small minority, 7%, were Asian

(University of Victoria, 1992). At York University, by way of comparison, in 1992 and 1993, 74% of students claimed European origins, 9% were of Chinese background, 5% of East Indian heritage, 4% were Black, and 8% had racial origins other than these (Grayson, 1994a).

Additional evidence of diversity in some Canadian universities can be seen in language usage. For example, of the entering class at the University of Toronto in 1994, only half of the students claimed English as a first language. This diversity is further complicated when observed according to discipline. For example, while English was claimed as the first language by two-thirds of the students in Victoria College, in the Engineering school only one-third of the student population spoke English as a first language (Kirkness, 1994).

Differences based on discipline were also noted at York University. In 1993 and 1994 only 53% of students entering Pure and Applied Science spoke English in the home while growing up. The figure for students entering Arts was a higher 74% (Grayson, 1993a). Among racial groups, the greatest number who spoke English while growing up were Blacks: 93% came from families in which English was spoken (Grayson, 1994a). In the Group of Seven, 68% learned English as a first language.

Reasons for Going to University

When asked why they were going to university in general, and to their chosen university in particular, students across the country give roughly the same answers: Students go to university both for intellectual development and in order to prepare themselves for the job market after graduation. Furthermore, in many cases there is little difference in emphasis placed on these two objectives. Students pick particular universities usually because of the reputation of the institution according to the quality of the programs offered. The consistency of this sort of response suggests that students may rationalize their choices in common terms.

Studies at the University of Guelph found information that supports the above contention. In a study conducted in the first semester in 1986, Gilbert discovered that 83% of males and 86% of females said that obtaining knowledge and skills applicable to a career was an important or very important reason for going to university. By way of contrast, only 61% of males and 70% of females said that intellectual development was an important or very important reason for attending university (Gilbert, 1986).

Similar findings come from a first-year survey at Dalhousie University, where 82% of first-year students reported going to university to become a better educated person. An equal percentage claimed to attend Dalhousie University in order to qualify for a high-level occupation (Christie, 1988). A 1985 survey administered at the University of Alberta found that 68% of entering students felt that preparing for an interesting career was a very important reason for going to university. Fewer, 41%, were in attendance to obtain a good general education (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). The same pattern is repeated at York University.

On a 100-point scale, Science students at York University gave 89 and 85 points, respectively, to enhancing career prospects and furthering their intellectual development as reasons for going to university, while Arts students allocated 85 and 87 points respectively (Grayson, 1993a). Figures from the University of Toronto are comparable. Eighty percent of students entering in 1994 said that getting a good job was one of the reasons they were attending the University of Toronto. Seventy nine percent also stated that learning more about something of personal interest was a reason for going to university (Kirkness, 1994). Explanations for going to Mount Saint Vincent were equivalent. In a September 1987 study it was found that, on a 5 point scale, entering students gave 4.8 to getting a job as a reason for university attendance, while attending in order to learn more about a specific topic scored 4.3 (Murray, Tanner, & Graves, 1990).

Fifty-six percent of students entering the Group of Seven in 1994 said that a good academic reputation was a very important factor in their choice of a specific university. Academic reputation as a significant factor in choosing one institution over another was also mentioned by

67% of first-year students at Dalhousie University (Christie, 1988). A similar percentage of University of Toronto students, 66%, noted academic reputation as a reason for their choice (Kirkness, 1994). How students came to the conclusion that the university in which they finally enrolled had a good academic reputation is beyond the scope of this chapter, although some readers may be interested in the fact that a 1994 survey of students entering York University found that only 3% thought *Macleans* annual ranking of universities was very useful (York University, 1994a).

In general, the vast majority of students believe that it is important to obtain a university degree. For example, 65% of Group of Seven students said that obtaining a degree was essential. This sentiment is echoed by York students. When asked before the commencement of classes how important, on a 100-point scale, they thought getting a degree was, the mean for science students was 89; for arts students, 88 (Grayson, 1993a). Similarly, at the University of Guelph in 1986, 74% of males and 78% of females in the first semester thought that a university degree was either extremely or very important (Gilbert, 1986).

Unfortunately, available data do not shed much light on how and when students decide to go to university and/or how they choose their majors; nonetheless, information from York University, the University of Calgary, and the University of Victoria indicates that, while the decision to attend university may occur long before the first year, a decision regarding which university to attend may occur much later. To explain, at the University of Victoria, 59% of the entering class of 1992 stated that they had decided to go to university before entering high school (University of Victoria, 1992). In a study of first-year chemistry students at the University of Calgary, researchers discovered that 41% of students decided that chemistry would be their university major while they were still in high school; 17% had made up their minds in junior high school (Donaldson & Dixon, 1993).

When it came to deciding which university to attend, 35% of students entering the Faculty of Arts at York University in 1994 said they had made their choice before November, 1993; 28% made their decision once acceptances were sent out from all universities in the province in June (York University, 1994a). It would be wrong, however, to assume a "rational choice" process in which students decide which university to attend only after weighing the advantages and disadvantages of all universities to which they are accepted. The fact that approximately only 50% of students entering York in 1994 could afford to go out of town supports this contention (York University, 1994a).

Information from several universities indicates that, at entry, students have ambitious plans. For example, among Group of Seven entrants in 1994, 50% expressed the intention of obtaining a master's or a doctoral degree. An almost identical number at the University of Guelph had similar intentions in 1986 (Gilbert, 1986). Of arts and science students entering York University in 1993 and 1994, 58% intended to pursue graduate education or get a professional degree (York University, 1994a). Obviously, students expectations far exceed their eventual accomplishments.

The General Nature of the Transition

That for some students going to university may represent a major life transition may be self-evident. Not surprisingly, this common sense impression is reinforced by research. For example, at the University of Guelph, a number of first-year students in residence were asked to keep detailed diaries, in which they recorded the types of experiences they had in the first few months of university. On the basis of these diaries and other information collected from first-year students, Michael Benjamin (1990) has identified 11 factors that *may* characterize or accompany the transition from high school to university:

- Increased academic challenge
- Reduced academic self-esteem
- Need to learn a new set of norms and assumptions
- Assimilation of new norms and values

- Disruption of ties to former peers and evolution of ties to a new peer group
- Change in tempo of daily life
- Novel living arrangements
- Sudden anonymity
- Threat to self-image
- Longing for home
- Severe and on-going stress

While these possibilities do not characterize the experiences of all students, and space is far too limited to pursue each in depth, some of the issues identified by Benjamin are supported by information collected in social surveys. Overall, these surveys support the idea that for many the transition to university may be a very trying time; for others, however, the experience is less traumatic.

Leaving Home

For some students, going to university means leaving home and friends. Among 1994 Group of Seven entrants, 44% of students left home to attend university. Among this group, the largest single number, 28%, reported that they would be in residence. Of those who did not leave home, 56% stated that they would be living with their parents for the first year. Even those who did leave home, however, did not go far. For example, 63% of all students (not just those who left home) were attending university 60 or fewer kilometres from their permanent residence. At the other extreme, only 6% were in a university 500 or more kilometres from home.

Data from other universities indicate that the situation of Group of Seven students is typical. For example, 53% of students at Dalhousie came from the Halifax area, and 42% reported living at home with their parents (Christie, 1988). The number of first-year York students who live at home with parents is 77%. At the University of Manitoba, 66% of first-year students resided with their parents (University of Manitoba, 1991). Sixty-one percent of first-year students at the University of Victoria reside with their mothers and/or fathers (University of Victoria, 1992). Roughly a similar number of students at the University of Alberta, 67%, also lived at home (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). By way of comparison, approximately 90% of first-year students at Queen's, and 68% of those at the University of Guelph, were in residence (Knox, 1991; Gilbert, 1986).

Social and Academic Involvement

The most obvious part of university life is going to classes; however, campus life can include far more activity than this. For example, students may attend political rallies or non-compulsory talks given by faculty and/or other individuals. They may also participate in organized sports or cultural activities such as theatre. While finite, the possibilities are extensive.

Organized or informal non-academic interactions students have with one another or with faculty can be called "social involvement." Participation in the formal curriculum, interactions with faculty over academic matters, and participation in general academic activities like the science club can be viewed as academic involvement. Research conducted in both the United States (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993) and Canada (Dietsche, 1990; Grayson, 1994b) indicates that involvement of this nature can be a positive experience in itself and can lead to desired outcomes. The latter possibility will be examined later in the chapter. For the time being attention will focus on various dimensions of social and academic involvement and The First-Year Experience with regard to each.

Friends

In a large study carried out in the United States, Astin (1993) came to the conclusion that students' peers and faculty, in that order, have the greatest potential impact on students' development. Not only do friends provide the student with a sense of well-being, they may also provide much needed psychological, academic, and even economic support. As a result, the development of friendships in the first year is crucial. How do students fare in this regard? We can

begin to answer this question by looking at students' high school experience so that what happens in university can be placed in context.

Information from students entering the Group of Seven in 1994 shows that in high school 27% socialized with their friends fewer than 6 hours per week; 30% spent from 6 to 10 hours a week with friends; 20%, from 11 to 15 hours; and 23%, 16 or more hours a week with friends. In high school, students spent a considerable amount of time with people they liked.

For some students, particularly those who live at home and commute to campus on a daily basis, it may be possible to maintain on-going connections with friends made in high school. For others, such as those who leave home to attend university, this may be less of a possibility, and it may become imperative to make new friends. For obvious reasons, those who leave home and live in residence are in a better position to make new friends than students who leave home and live off campus. As noted in a diary-based study carried out at the University of Guelph, "the initial prerequisite for the development of friendships is sustained, regular interaction. . . the residence environment alone met these requirements" (Benjamin, 1990). With this observation in mind, it would be helpful to show how these three living arrangements affect students' chances of making friends on campus. Unfortunately, existing data only permit a cursory examination of the problem.

Information from York University, a large commuter institution (only 10% of students live in residence), shows that at registration only 16% of students anticipated that making friends might be problematic. At year's end, a similar percentage, 19%, said that it had been a problem (Grayson, 1994c). Overall, during their first year at York University, students made 14 new friends on average, but spent only three 3 hours a week with them. Nonetheless, unpublished data show that, at York, first-year students living in residence made 24 new friends and interacted with them an average of 10 hours per week. Students living off campus made only 13 new friends with whom they spent three hours a week. The data indicate that in terms of friendships that are university based, students living in residence have advantages not shared by others.

Studies carried out at two other universities, the University of Manitoba and the University of Calgary, yielded results similar to those at York University. At the former, a survey discovered that high school students expected less difficulty in making friends than the actual level of difficulty reported by first-year students at the University of Manitoba (University of Manitoba, 1991). More important is the survey finding that 78% of students living in residence developed close personal relationships with other students, and 78% said that such relationships were personally satisfying. By way of contrast, the comparable figures for students living off campus were 38% and 51% (University of Manitoba, 1990). Along the same lines, a study of first-year chemistry students at the University of Calgary found that, at the end of their first semester, only 12% of students had formed friendships with classmates, and only 21% had made new social acquaintances (Donaldson & Dixon, 1993).

Unfortunately, data on universities in which the vast majority of students live in residence are unavailable. It can be hypothesized, however, that at such institutions the transition to university may be eased somewhat by the possibilities made available through residence living. It must be stressed that the inability to provide residences to first-year students does not necessarily represent institutional failure: Quite simply, particularly in universities that recruit large numbers of students from low income families, many students cannot afford residence living.

Organized Social Activities

Information on those entering the Group of Seven in 1994 confirms that new recruits led socially involved lives when they were at high school. For example, only 5% reported no involvement in sports on a weekly basis. An additional 12% spent less than an hour on this type of activity while 22% engaged in sports between 1 and 2 hours per week. The modal participation was from 3 to 5 hours with 26% indicating this level of sports activity. In total, 37% of entering students participated in sports 6 or more hours per week. In view of these figures, it is

hardly surprising that 34% stated there was either a good or a very good chance that they would engage in varsity sports.

While not as high, the figures for weekly participation in clubs are equally impressive. While 37% indicated no involvement in this type of activity, 11% mentioned a commitment of up to 1 hour. The modal commitment, 21%, was for 1 to 2 hours of weekly involvement. Seventeen percent spent 3 to 5 hours in club activity per week, and 14% spent more than 5 hours.

Available data suggest levels of involvement in both small and large universities that are much lower than those in high school. In a doctoral dissertation written about the University of Calgary in 1979, the situation was summarized in this way: "Few students spent time loitering around the university campus, and non-academic spectator events were not well attended. Both student clubs and student government attracted little observable support, and meetings were often cancelled for lack of numbers" (Meyers, 1979).

Information collected since then indicates that low levels of social involvement are not unique to the University of Calgary nor have they increased in intervening years. For example, in a study conducted before the start of classes at Mount Saint Vincent University in 1987, on a 5-point scale where 1 meant low and 5 high, incoming students estimated their involvement in athletics and student clubs at 2.4 and 3.0. In a survey conducted at the end of the first year, however, the same students rated their actual involvement at only 1.6 for athletics and 1.6 for student clubs. In essence, while expectations may have been somewhat consistent with high school experiences, actual first-year involvement was lower than anticipated (Murray et al., 1990).

In a survey conducted at the University of Victoria early in the 1992-93 academic year, only 18% of first-year students were found to belong to intramural teams. While 27% belonged to clubs, only 11% belonged to course unions (University of Victoria, 1992). At the other end of the country, Dalhousie University found in a survey conducted late in February 1988 that 58% of students were not involved in extra-curricular life, and only 18% participated in intramural activities (Christie, 1988). In a retrospective study of first-year students carried out at Ryerson Polytechnic University in the fall of 1991, results indicated perhaps a slightly higher participation rate in extra-curricular activities. For example, only 15% of students indicated that they spent no time in an average week on this type of endeavor. Moreover, 50% spent between one and five hours per week on extra-curricular events. Thirty-six percent spent six or more hours on such activities. This potential anomaly aside (we would have to determine what students had in mind when they talked about extra-curricular events in this context) the findings of a study of The First-Year Experience at the University of Alberta seem to apply to most first-year experiences. In this 1985 study, it is concluded that the first year is characterized by, "little involvement in extra-curricular physical education activities, extra-curricular academic and cultural events (e.g., lectures, concerts), and student clubs" (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987).

The overall situation at York University is no different. In the Faculty of Arts, an end-of-first year survey conducted in 1994 indicated that the average number of sports activities watched by students was .71. The average number of sports activities participated in was only .48. On average, students also only belonged to .48 clubs or organizations (Grayson, 1994c). For students in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science, 54% were members of no campus organizations; 70% engaged in no campus sports; 75% watched no campus sports; and 71% did not regularly visit campus pubs (Grayson, 1993b).

While the overall involvement rate at York University is as low as elsewhere, comparisons between residence students and those who live with their parents (77% of first-year students) reveal large differences. Unpublished research shows that at the end of 1994, the equivalent of 33 percentile points separates social involvement scores (participation in formal and informal social activities) of students living in residence from those living with parents. While no comparable studies conducted in Canada could be found, it is clear that, at York, residence living facilitates social involvement of first-year students. At the same time, first-year marks of

residence students are slightly lower than those of students who live at home with their parents (Grayson, 1995).

Out-of-Class Faculty Contacts

A substantial body of research indicates that the frequency of student-faculty contact outside of the classroom can have important implications for a number of first-year outcomes, including retention and academic development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). As a result, it is important to assess first-year students' experiences in this regard. Available information suggests that while students had considerable out-of-class interaction with teachers in high school, their first-year experience is totally different.

Information provided by students entering the Group of Seven indicates that, on a weekly basis in high school, only 7% spent no time talking to their teachers. While the modal time for talking to teachers was less than one hour (38% reported this amount of time talking), 35% talked to teachers between one and two hours a week. Nineteen percent reported talking to their teachers three or more hours a week.

In view of these findings, it is not surprising that students surveyed at York University in 1993 anticipated a considerable amount of out-of-class contact with professors, one very important component of academic involvement (Grayson, 1993c). Unpublished results of a survey carried out at the end of first year makes it possible to compare these expectations with actual contacts.

In the Faculty of Arts (the largest faculty at York) while 81% had expected at least one contact of ten minutes or more per month to discuss a campus issue, by the end of the year, based on the previous two months, only 55% of first-year students had experienced the expected contact. In September, 94% of entering students thought they would have discussions focusing on their plans for future occupations, but by year's end only 63% reported such discussions. Likewise, whereas 98% thought they would get together with their professors to get basic program information, only 43% did so. With regard to discussions of intellectual matters, 80% expected talks with faculty, but only 62% realized this objective. To a degree, these differences between expectations and actual amounts of out-of-class contact were expected. What came as somewhat of a surprise was that contacts with professors to deal with personal problems and to socialize informally exceeded expectations. Whereas only 32% of students anticipated contacts with professors to help in solving a personal problem, 55% actually had encounters of this nature. While 55% expected to socialize informally with their professors, 57% actually achieved this objective.

Unfortunately, data are unavailable that would permit comparisons with experiences elsewhere. A partial exception is a survey carried out at the University of Guelph toward the end of the first term in 1986 (Gilbert, 1986). Although classes were well under way when the survey was carried out, levels of expected out-of-class contact with faculty were high.

Informal Academic Activities

Informal academic activities that students might become involved in include attendance at talks given by guest speakers, joining a club with a specific academic connection (e.g., the chemistry club), attending rallies, and so on. While information on matters such as these is sparse, there is some suggestion that students enter university with expectations that will not be realized. For example, 44% of entering Group of Seven students indicated that there was a good or very good chance that they would become student activists. While figures on the actual number of students who become activists are unavailable, it is certain that the number is much lower than 44%.

Information collected at Mount Saint Vincent University on involvement in academic and cultural activities and student clubs sheds light on expectations and experiences in these areas. At the beginning of the first year, on a 5-point scale where 1 meant low and 5 high, students ranked the likelihood of their becoming involved in academic and cultural activities at 2.9. By the end of first year, the very same students gave themselves 1.7 for these activities. Similarly, at the start of classes, students gave themselves a score

of 3.0 for probable involvement in student clubs. By end of term actual involvement was only ranked 1.6 (Murray et al., 1990).

Information from Trent University sheds some light on the benefit that students derive from participation in informal academic-related activities. In this instance, a study conducted at the end of the first year on college based activities found that 86% of residence and 63% of non-residence students believed that college events enriched their experience. In addition, 93% of residence students and 66% of those living off campus thought that colleges provided the opportunity for leadership development (Wong, 1994a).

Social and academic involvement that occurs outside of the classroom can be enjoyable in itself. In addition, as will be seen later, under certain circumstances, it may contribute to desirable outcomes of the first year, including academic success. These possibilities aside, it is evident that the initial expectations of students concerning social and academic involvement, which are largely based on high school experiences, are not met in the first year of university. The degree to which the same is true of formal academic involvement, or classroom experiences, can now be examined.

Formal Learning Experiences

While students may learn in situations that have already been described as social and academic involvement, it is the classroom that is most frequently thought of in connection with learning. When examining classrooms, three primary factors stand out as contributing to a successful experience for students: students' attitudes and preparation for learning (Donald, 1993) and the amount of time they are prepared to commit to their studies; the nature of peer relationships in the class (Benjamin, 1990); and the ability of the instructor in the extent to which he or she is able to facilitate the development of a positive learning environment (Fassinger, 1995). While research carried out on Canadian campuses can shed light on the first two of these factors, little is available on the third. At best, we can look at levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the classroom experience, and infer certain things about the ability of instructors and/or the extent to which they can contribute to positive learning environments.

Academic Preparation

At the beginning of the first year, when asked to assess their academic ability, 14% of Group of Seven students felt that they were in the highest 10%. A further 54% stated that they were above average (already we have an arithmetic impossibility). Thirty one percent felt that their academic ability was average, while only 1% felt below average.

A similar level of self-confidence is evident when self-assessed writing ability is examined. Overall, 9% of students believed that they were in the top 10% in this area; 35% and 47% responded above average and average respectively. Only 10% felt that, when it came to writing ability, they were below average. Having made these statements, 40% agreed somewhat and 15% strongly agreed that grading in high school is too easy.

Some information collected at various points through the first year indicates that some students have a realistic appraisal of how prepared they are for university. For example, at York University, prior to classes, 59% of entering students believed that they were academically prepared for university. In a survey carried out in March, 58% stated that they had been academically prepared for their studies. In this instance, however, results varied by race: For example, the number of black students who felt that they were or had been academically prepared for university increased from 52% at entry to 76% by March. By way of contrast, 50% of students of Chinese origin at entry had felt academically prepared for university. In the re-assessment in March, however, only 43% believed that they had actually been prepared (Grayson, 1994a).

Another study with a before and after design was carried out at Mount Saint Vincent University. In this case students discovered that they were better prepared than anticipated on some items; with regard to other areas, they were less prepared than they had thought. For example, on a 5-point scale where 5 means high, students

gave themselves 3.4 for being prepared to write exams at entry. At the end of the year they scored 3.7 in terms of how prepared they actually had been. While the differences are small, they are statistically significant.

On other items, the same study suggests a bit of wishful thinking on the part of pre-entry first-year students. In terms of preparation for writing essays and papers, the initial score for first-year students was 3.5. By year's end it had declined to 3.3. Self-assessments of library skills dropped from 3.4 to 3.2, time budgeting skills from 3.5 to 3.2, and self-discipline from 3.8 to 3.5. Once again, although small, differences are statistically significant (Murray et al., 1990).

Studies conducted on other campuses suggest even wider gaps between initial assessments of academic preparedness and reconsiderations later in the year. As the studies that give rise to these impressions were carried out well after the start of classes, however, it is difficult to know if initial expectations were similar to those of students entering the previous universities, at which surveys were collected before and after classes transpired. Leaving this question unanswered, it is important, nonetheless, to note that in a study carried out in the second semester at the University of Alberta, many students commented on their lack of preparation for university. To quote one student, "the high school I attended last year did very little to prepare me as to what to expect for home work, self-discipline, or even professor instruction" (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). A focus group study carried out at the University of Waterloo came to similar conclusions (Willment, 1994). Also, a survey carried out toward the end of the first semester at the University of Guelph in 1986 revealed that, by then, only 17% of males and 13% of females said that they had been academically prepared for university (Gilbert, 1986).

While differences exist with regard to how academically prepared students felt they were for university, the inadequacy of work habits and study skills is a constant refrain. Indeed, problems in this area may be among the most difficult faced by students in their first year of university. At Dalhousie University, for example, toward the end of the first year, students ranked their study skills lower than their abilities in mathematics, writing, general knowledge, and reading (Christie, 1988). Similarly, in a study conducted in February at the University of Alberta, on a 5-point scale where 5 means high, first-year students gave themselves 2.5 and 2.9 for budgeting time and study skills respectively. Scores for taking notes, listening skills, and reading skills were 3.5, 3.6, and 3.6 respectively (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). Likewise, at York University, end-of-the-year surveys indicated that, whereas 59% of students in Arts stated that they had been prepared academically, only 43% had been prepared in terms of work habits and study skills. In Science, 51% of students believed that they had been academically prepared for university, but only 27% believed that they had adequate work habits and study skills (Grayson, 1994c).

Time Commitment to Studies

Independent of how academically prepared students are for university, success requires the commitment of long periods of time to studies. Data collected on Group of Seven students, however, indicate that the high school experience of many may render them unprepared for what awaits them at the university level. To be more precise, during high school, 29% of students stated that they had done only five or fewer hours of homework per week. An additional 27% reported doing between six and ten hours. Twenty percent reported between 11 and 15 hours of homework per week, and 22% 16 hours or more.

Unpublished data collected in 1993 and 1994 on students entering York University indicate expectations of work outside of class that are considerably higher than hours devoted to high school homework. More specifically, only 23% of students believed that they would spend 14 or fewer hours per week on their studies outside of class. Twenty percent and 24%, respectively, expected to devote 15 to 19, and 20 to 24, hours to their school work. The remaining 33% anticipated that it would take 25 or more hours out of class to keep up with the demands of their courses.

Despite these initial expectations, follow-up surveys conducted in March of the first year indicate

that students actually spent less time on their out-of-class studies than anticipated. More concretely, 38% reported spending 14 or fewer hours on this type of activity. Thirteen percent spent 15 to 19 hours per week on their out-of-class studies, while 15% spent 20 to 24 hours. It is interesting to note, however, that the percentage who reported 25 or more hours, 34%, is roughly equal to the percentage who believed they would spend this much time. In essence, over the course of the first year, many students devoted less out-of-class time to their studies than anticipated, while the number who spent a great deal of time on their studies is equal to the number who expected this to be the case. Indeed, actual hours spent on course work outside of the class were less than anticipated, but greater than the time spent by Group of Seven students on homework in high school. This finding may indicate good intentions at the beginning of the first year but a slide back to high school habits as the year progresses.

Peer Relationships in the Classroom

In his diary-based study on first-year residence students at the University of Guelph, Benjamin (1990) argues that the quality of peer relationships in the classroom is an extremely important component of the learning process. He observed that, "when . . . relations were cordial and/or supportive, class time became a pleasure one soon came to depend upon; when such relations failed to evolve, leaving one isolated and alone among strangers, class time could soon become aversive" (p. 48). Unfortunately, it is impossible to assess the extent to which first-year students in Canadian universities participate in the type of positive relationship described by Benjamin; the research has not yet been carried out. In addition, we do not know how such relationships affect learning outcomes such as grades. However, research being conducted at York University has explored peer relationships in classes and the degree to which they contribute to positive learning outcomes as one of its objectives.

One very important function of class-based peer relations is the provision of information on what has been called the "hidden curriculum" (Meyers, 1979; Benjamin, 1990). "Sure, that's what he says, but what does he *really* want?" Also, through interactions with their peers, students devise strategies in order to gain maximum flexibility with respect to their academic objectives. For example, students may enroll in more courses than they intend to take so that they can psych out professors and end up with those with whom they feel most at ease. Through the same routes they discover the "easy markers," as well as those who do not mind if assignments are late. To a large degree, successful adaptation to university *requires* the development of these and other survival strategies.

Teaching Effectiveness and Positive Learning Climates

These and other comments recorded in first-year students' diaries at the University of Guelph lead to the conclusion that faculty members viewed as good teachers have pedagogical expertise, know their subject, are organized, care about students, and have a sense of humour (Benjamin, 1990). Those seen as bad teachers are disrespectful of students, show favouritism, and have irritating personal mannerisms (Benjamin, 1990).

- "A good prof is one that encourages questions."
- "The good prof, as far as I'm concerned, goes through every single step there is . . . they're clear on exams and tests."
- "He's not stuffy."
- "He goes at a reasonable pace [and] makes sure we have a chance to copy. He also seems to have a sense of humour."

Surveys carried out on Canadian campuses do not always focus on specific characteristics or behaviours of instructors. Instead, the emphasis is usually on satisfaction with different aspects of instructor behaviour. Despite its limitations, such information does allow us to gain some understanding of the degree to which faculty are effective teachers and contribute to positive learning environments.

Although the evidence is fragmentary, Benjamin's comment that, "when . . . subjects

did meet with professors on a one-to-one basis, they were typically surprised . . . to find them cordial, welcoming and actually helpful" (1990, p. 55), likely can be applied to students in most Canadian universities. Certainly some unpublished focus group materials from York University confirm this impression. Also, more systematic information collected from surveys indicates that at least half of first-year students in Canadian universities find their professors and/or their classes satisfactory. When examining such materials, however, it is important not to use questions that might have been worded differently in surveys, often conducted at various points in the year, to compare universities in terms of satisfaction levels. In fact, to ensure that material presented does not lead to invidious comparisons, positive and negative findings from each university will be presented.

At Dalhousie University, toward the end of the first year, 83% of students stated that they were satisfied with the teaching they received. Seventy-four percent believed that professors took an interest in their progress. By way of comparison, only 24% said there was a professor to whom they could turn for advice (Christie, 1988). At Trent, after the end of classes, 87% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that professors had been willing to help. At the same time, 70% agreed or strongly agreed that professors were boring lecturers (Wong, 1994b). At York University, 65% agreed that professors, where possible, had given them exposure to a variety of perspectives in class; however, only 55% were satisfied with overall course content (Grayson, 1994a). At the University of Victoria, a survey early in the first year indicated that while 75% felt that courses were intellectually challenging, only 57% felt that class atmospheres were conducive to learning (University of Victoria, 1992).

One aspect of The First-Year Experience that appears to be somewhat of a constant is large class sizes. As a result, it is important to examine students' reactions to this aspect of The First-Year Experience. Overall, the evidence suggests that, in general, students may be more dissatisfied than satisfied with the size of their classes.

This possibility was articulated in an end-of-the-year survey conducted at the University of Guelph in 1987. In this instance, it was found that only 42% of students were satisfied with the size of their classes (Gilbert, 1987). Similar results were obtained in some unpublished research conducted at York University in 1993 and 1994 at exactly the same time of year as the Guelph study. In this instance, 47% were satisfied with class sizes. It is important to note that at both institutions first-year students have many large classes. At Mount Saint Vincent University, on a 5-point adjustment scale where 1 meant low and 5 high, entering students gave themselves an entering score of 2.8 with regard to anticipated amount of adjustment that would be required to class sizes at university. At the end of the year, the same students rated the actual amount of adjustment at only 2.0. Class size required less adjustment than anticipated (Murray et al., 1990).

Despite figures such as these, at the University of Alberta it was observed that "only a small number of students noted that smaller classes would help make them feel more at ease" (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). By way of contrast, when asked to identify the one change they would most like to see made, 43% of first-year chemistry students at the University of Calgary said "more opportunity for smaller group discussion" (Donaldson & Dixon, 1993, p. 14). Inconsistencies in available data indicate that, while students may in general be less than satisfied with class sizes in the first year, it is difficult to make conclusive statements regarding student satisfaction on this dimension. The degree to which small classes facilitate learning is a different matter, and, unfortunately, one that cannot be discussed within the confines of this chapter (Gilbert, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

First-Year Difficulties

It is understandable that students would encounter a number of difficulties in their first year of university. For discussion purposes, it is convenient to organize these into difficulties that derive from the university environment and those that come from outside of the university context. Important among the former is the

amount of work required to succeed, as well as being able to get into specific courses. External problems include concerns such as being able to meet the expectations of family and friends, money matters, and having suitable accommodation. Unfortunately, space constraints prohibit dealing with all of these and other first-year difficulties. As a result, attention will focus on a few typical problems encountered by students in various universities.

In most studies of The First-Year Experience that have been conducted at Canadian universities, the workload associated with university has been identified as a major problem (this concern should be seen in connection with the possibility, as mentioned earlier, that first-year students devote no more time to their studies than they did in high school). At Dalhousie University, for example, an end-of-the-year survey identified lack of time as the number one problem mentioned by students, followed by finances and learning to study (Christie, 1988). At the University of Alberta, in the spring of the first year, 72% said they were working harder than in high school, and 72% said that it was difficult to adjust to the amount of required work (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987).

Among first-year students at the University of Manitoba, 56% reported having difficulties in meeting academic demands (University of Manitoba, 1990). At the University of Guelph, however, slightly fewer appear to have had difficulty with the amount of work needed for their studies: An end-of-the-year survey shows that 41% of males and 38% of females identified problems in this area (Gilbert, 1987). Early in the first year, similar numbers (41%) at the University of Victoria also identified managing the workload as the hardest part of adjusting to academic demands (University of Victoria, 1992). In addition to workloads, 67% of first-year students at the University of Guelph pointed to not being able to get into courses they wanted as problematic. Fifty-six percent also said that their ability to do university level work was a concern (Gilbert, 1987). Students at Mount Saint Vincent University similarly focused on matters like the amount of required work and the difficulty of that work as problems they had to confront (Murray et al., 1990).

When it came to commenting on problems emanating from outside the university, students frequently spoke of money troubles. At entry, 71% of Group of Seven first-year students indicated that financing their education was of concern to them. In March of the first year, 44% of Arts and Science first-year students at York University mentioned that having enough money to meet expenses had been a problem (Grayson, 1994a). Lack of money was also identified as a problem by students at Mount Saint Vincent University (Murray et al., 1990).

In at least two universities, the University of Guelph and York University, the most frequently mentioned external difficulty encountered was family problems that interfered with studies. At Guelph, 59% of students cited this difficulty. At York the figures were 51% for Science, and 43% for Arts (Gilbert, 1987; Grayson, 1994c). Figures such as these demonstrate that, even though students have entered university, families continue to make substantial claims on their lives.

Emotional Health, Stress, and Self-Confidence

A few studies conducted on Canadian campuses attempt to focus on the emotional effects of The First-Year Experience. Impressions of the emotional toll of the first year depend upon whether or not analyses focus on emotional preparedness of students or stress. Available information on the former suggests that students may fare reasonably well. Data on the latter suggest a less encouraging situation.

In their initial assessments of what is referred to as emotional health, Group of Seven students felt that they were in pretty good shape. For example, 14% believed that they were in the top 10% of the emotionally healthy, and an additional 36% believed they were above average. Forty-three percent said they were average, and the small remainder, 7%, believed that their emotional health was below average. Similarly, when they started university, 61% of students at York University believed that they were emotionally prepared for university (Grayson, 1994a). (Focus group debriefings at York University revealed that to a large degree, when students said they were emotionally prepared

for university, they meant that they were mature enough to take on the responsibilities of university life.) By the end of the first year, 56% of York University students still stated that they had been emotionally prepared for university. Gilbert's finding in the spring of 1987, that at Guelph 65% of males and females believed that they had been emotionally prepared for university, is similar to the finding reported above for York University. Findings from the University of Manitoba are consistent with those from York and Guelph. In this instance, it was found that high school students thought The First-Year Experience would be more stressful than the actual level of stress reported by students at the end of the first year (University of Manitoba, 1991).

The findings of a retrospective study conducted at Queen's University in 1991 indicate how stressful the first year can be for students. When students in the fall of the second year reflected on their first-year experiences, "approximately 70% of respondents saw the first year as more stressful than their most stressful high school year" (Knox, 1991). In addition, considerable gender-based differences were observed. For example, while only 54% of males identified a drop in marks as a stressor, 82% of females did so. Similarly, whereas only 36% of males mentioned having a heavy work load as a stressor, 90% of females found the work load a stressor (Knox, 1991). An end-of-the-year study of first-year Science students at York University also revealed differences between male and female students with regard to stress. On a 5-point scale where 5 meant high, females scored 3.39 while the score for males was only 2.64 (Grayson, 1993c).

In addition to emotional preparedness and stress, some Canadian studies have also dealt with the question of student self-confidence, and what happens to it over the course of the first year. At the University of Manitoba, for example, it was found that student self-confidence decreased over the first year (University of Manitoba, 1991). Similar results were obtained in a study of first-year Science students at York University. In addition, by the end of the first year, there was a considerable gulf between the self-confidence of male and female students. First, females ranked themselves lower than males in terms of thinking and reasoning skills. On a 5-point scale the respective means were 3.66 and 3.87. Second, while the mean score for males with regard to problem solving ability was 3.85, for females it was only 3.40. Third, females ranked their decision-making skills lower than males: 3.59 compared to 3.81. Fourth, female students ranked their competency in quantitative mathematical skills at 3.21; the score for males was 3.69. These ratings should be viewed in relation to the fact that the grade point averages for males and females were identical (Grayson, 1993b).

Gender based differences relevant to self-confidence were also found at the University of Guelph. In an examination of The First-Year Experience, it was concluded that, "women, on the whole, tend to be more motivated, feel they have more energy and drive and have more confidence in their work habits and study skills than men. On the other hand, women tend to have much less confidence about their academic and intellectual ability" (Gilbert & Auger, 1988b, p. 8).

Sources of Help

When students have problems in first year, to whom do they turn for support? If the problem is with academic matters, Science students at York University, as a first step, turn to their classmates: In total, approximately 88% of students with problems identify classmates as a source of help. Friends are a close second, with about 85% of students identifying them. Professors and lab demonstrators are sources of help for only 55% of students. Parents are turned to by only about one quarter of students. Overall differences between males and females with regard to sources of help are minor (Grayson, 1993b).

A retrospective study carried out at Queen's also indicates that classmates and friends are the most frequently mentioned sources of help for students in the first year; however, while 83% of females mentioned friends and classmates, only 71% of males did the same. At York, parents were mentioned infrequently in terms of help with studies; however, at Queen's, 83% of female students and 62% of males mentioned parents as a source of help (however, we do not

know what type of help students were thinking of). Professors were mentioned by only 28% of females and 26% of males (Knox, 1991).

Work

While in high school, more than half of Group of Seven students worked at paid employment six or more hours a week. Fifty-seven percent said that there was some, or a very good, chance that they would take a job while in university. For the majority of students, employment appears to be a fact of life in both high school and university.

Independent of intentions, there is some variation from campus to campus in terms of the numbers of students who feel that they will likely seek work or who are actually working. A study conducted in 1985 at the University of Alberta, for example, found that only 28% of first-year students were employed (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). More recent information from the University of Victoria (1992) indicated that at the beginning of first year at that institution, 36% had jobs, while 64% were neither employed nor seeking work (University of Victoria, 1992). At the University of Manitoba, 54% were employed (University of Manitoba, 1991).

At the end of 1993 and 1994, unpublished research shows that an even greater number of first-year York students (60%) reported that they were working for pay outside of the university; however, when high school marks were controlled, the correlation between hours of work and final first-year marks was only –.12. In essence, the impact of work on grades is minor. Consistent with this finding on the relation between work and marks is the fact that in a study of first-year chemistry students at the University of Calgary, 39% said that work only "slightly reduced GPA" (Donaldson & Dixon, 1993, p. 35). Findings such as there are perhaps counter-intuitive and are inconsistent with common assumptions regarding the relations between work and academic achievement; nonetheless, they are consistent with the findings of American studies (Gleason, 1993). More important than whether or not students work is where they work (jobs on campus have been positively linked to academic development), and how much time is devoted to work (students who work a moderate number of hours may achieve higher grades than those who do not work).

Discrimination, Harassment, and Abuse

Although an important issue on Canadian campuses, information on the amount of discrimination, harassment, and abuse experienced by first-year students is scarce. While the position should be taken that all of the foregoing are unacceptable, the little information that does exist suggests that levels of some forms of discrimination etc. are low. At the University of Victoria, for example, a survey conducted early in the academic year found that 4% of first-year students had experienced verbal/physical assault; 3% had experienced racist comments; but fewer than 1% had received sexually harassing comments (University of Victoria, 1992).

In a study conducted at the end of first year, students at Trent University were asked to comment on both discrimination and harassment. While 19% of males had reported experiences of gender discrimination, only 13% of females reported the same (unfortunately, the nature of the discrimination is not explained). Similarly, whereas 8% of male students stated that they had experienced racial discrimination, only 3% of females had this experience. When it came to sexual harassment, 5% of males and 11% of females claimed to have been victims. Sexual assault was experienced by only .7% of males and .8% of females. Physical abuse was reported by 2% of males and .6% of females. Finally, 12% of males and 9% of females encountered verbal abuse, and 10% and 3% respectively reported verbal threats (Wong, 1994c).

At Queen's University, in a retrospective examination of the first year, 2% of males and 6% of females stated that sexual harassment had been a stressor for them. More importantly, while only 1% of males feared for their personal safety, 26% of females had concerns in this regard (Knox, 1991).

While students at York University were not asked about their own experiences of discrimination, harassment, or abuse, they were queried on the extent to which they felt that visible

minorities, women, and gays/lesbians should be treated just like anyone else. Answers to these questions indicate that at York University, the overwhelming majority of first-year students believe that all students should be treated equally; nonetheless, support for gays/lesbians was slightly lower than for visible minorities and women (Grayson, 1994a). This commitment to equality suggests that, in their daily activities, students might treat others as individuals, rather than in terms of their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Figures such as the foregoing are encouraging. While unpleasant encounters with other students certainly occur over the course of the first year, they likely affect a small minority. Nonetheless, when all is said and done, it is likely that female students are more likely than males to have negative experiences.

Overall Adjustment to University

Information in previous sections has focused on various aspects of The First-Year Experience. Overall, how difficult is it to adjust to the challenges posed in the first year? Data from half a dozen universities help answer this question and suggest that orientation programs and specialized first-year courses can assist in transitions.

Orientation

Findings from a large number of students indicate differences in rates of adjustment. For example, at the University of Alberta, a survey conducted in February and March of the first year showed that while 49% of students adjusted within two months, 17% still felt that they had not adjusted at the time of the survey, (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). Somewhat similar rates were observed in a study based on diaries at the University of Guelph. In this case it was discovered that one-third of first-year students adjusted quickly, one-third needed until the end of the semester, and one-third fell between (Benjamin, 1990). In answer to a somewhat different question, an examination of first-year chemistry students carried out in the fall at the University of Calgary found that only 48% said the transition from high school had been easy (Donaldson & Dixon, 1993).

A survey conducted at the University of Victoria discovered, at least with respect to administrative matters, that it was the simple things that quite often posed difficulties for students. For example, 22% of students said that the hardest part of making the adjustment to university was not knowing who to ask about concerns; 25% mentioned not knowing where to find things; and 19% identified the feeling that they should know already as a hard part of the adjustment process (University of Victoria, 1992).

Quite frequently, orientation programs can assist students in making the transition to the university. In a retrospective study carried out in the second year at Queen's, it was concluded that, "In all faculties and schools the majority of respondents saw orientation week as good preparation for first year" (Knox, 1991). Equally important is that advice received from other students or student advisors was viewed as more valuable than that obtained from academic advisors.

Residence students participating in an orientation program at the University of Manitoba indicated that the orientation program helped them adjust to university life (University of Manitoba, 1990). On a scale with 0 indicating no difficulty and 100 meaning very great difficulty in adjusting, residence students who participated in the orientation program averaged 35. Students in residence who did not participate in the program scored a higher 41; however, the highest scorers, with an average of 53, were students living off campus who did not participate in orientation.

At Trent University, data collected in July of the first year (end of term) indicate that an orientation program assists in the transition to first-year environments, particularly for students in residence: While 73% of students living off campus indicated that orientation week had helped them to adjust, the figure for students in residence was 89% (Wong, 1994a). Data such as these suggest that properly administered orientation programs coupled with residence living assist in the transition to University. As seen in earlier sections, factors such as academic and social involvement also assist in the transition to university.

Specialized Courses

Another organizational form that can assist students in their transition to university is the so-called freshman seminar. The objectives of such seminars include the enhancement of The First-Year Experience; where needed, the development of skills essential to postsecondary survival—critical skills, time management, study skills, etc.; and the integration of the student into the university through an understanding of its culture and participation in its activities (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). In these seminars, students learn how to be successful students.

In the United States, various studies show that along a number of dimensions, including retention and grades, participants fare better than non-participants (Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Where similar seminars are offered in this country, preliminary evidence points to similar effects. For example, research conducted at the University of Prince Edward Island shows that the first-year retention rates of seminar participants are 23% higher than average, and four-year graduation rates are 16% higher for those enrolled in seminars compared to other students (Robb, 1993). Although Robb was unable to establish a control for entering marks of the students he studied, he feels that the introduction of the appropriate controls would not affect the direction of the outcomes. Research carried out at the University of Victoria, where similar courses are offered, also points toward the benefits associated with seminar participation (Parsons & McLachlan, 1991).

Outcomes of the First Year

Marks

From many students' points of view, good marks are an important outcome of The First-Year Experience. In addition, many entering students may feel that their success in high school, with regard to marks, will be sustained in university. Among Group of Seven students surveyed at the beginning of the year, for example, 45% felt that there was a very good chance that they would receive a B average. An additional 49% felt that there was some chance of achieving the same objective. Conversely, only 1% felt that there was a very good chance of course failure, and 20% some chance of that kind of mishap.

At the University of Manitoba, students were asked to rank confidence in their ability to achieve their desired first-year grades. The score for students in residence who attended the orientation program was 67. Residence students who did not participate scored 63. Individuals living off-campus followed with a score of 60 (University of Manitoba, 1990). The important point, however, is not the difference based on residence location or participation in the orientation program, but the fact that the majority of all students were confident that they could achieve their objectives in terms of marks.

Optimism such as this is evident in a before-and-after study conducted at York University. In 1993 and 1994, 36% of entering students expected a first-year mark of A or better. In actuality, only 11% of students achieved this objective. At the other end of the spectrum, only 37% expected B or less. Unfortunately, 73% of students ended up with this mark (Grayson, 1994a). Not surprisingly, the correlation between marks in the final year of high school and first-year marks in the faculties of Arts and Science at York University is only .37. At the University of Manitoba it is marginally higher at .46.

Considerable differences in expected and actual marks are also observed in a before-and-after study carried out at Mount Saint Vincent University. At the beginning of school, only 14% of students estimated that their final mark would be in the 60% to 69% range. By the end of the year, the marks of 34% of students were within this bandwidth. While 83% had expected to get between 70% and 89%, only 33% achieved marks in this range (Murray et al., 1990).

At the University of Alberta, questions on marks were asked in a slightly different way; nonetheless, evidence of unfulfilled expectations again is unmistakable. Of students who compared their expectations to their accomplishments, "only 11% . . . reported levels of accomplishment that were 'better than expected.' A large proportion (48%) felt that they were doing 'less well than

expected,' while 41% indicated that they were achieving 'about as expected'" (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). More females than males were performing slightly better than expected, while more students in Science than in Arts were doing worse than they had thought.

Evidence from both the University of Manitoba (1991) and the University of Guelph (Gilbert & Pomfret, 1991) indicates that scholarship holders are not exempt from the difference between expectations and actual achievement. In the latter university, for example, in 1988, only 65% of males and 46% of females in Science had marks high enough to renew their Canada Scholarships. The authors attribute the relative success of males in science, in part, to a "justice and rights" compared to a "care and responsibilities" orientation toward the world. Science disciplines are more in keeping with the former than the latter.

Satisfaction

Clearly, students do not attain their desired outcomes with regard to first-year marks. Is this true of other areas as well? If we view satisfaction with the university experience as a desired outcome (i.e., having a satisfying experience is an end in itself) the answer is no. Overall, students on Canadian campuses express considerable satisfaction with their first year at university.

At Dalhousie, for example, in an end-of-year survey, 7% rated their overall education as excellent and 51% as good (Christie, 1988). At the University of Alberta, 53% of first-year students said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall university experience (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). The numbers of students at York University who expressed satisfaction with their overall program was 65% (Grayson, 1994a). Satisfaction with personal intellectual development was indicated by 53% of residence, and 41% of non-residence students in an end-of-the-year survey conducted at the University of Manitoba (1990). Finally, in a retrospective study (the results of which are not directly comparable to the foregoing), 76% of students at Queen's stated that the university had lived up to their first-year expectations (Knox, 1991).

Although, in general, students are satisfied with their first year of university, satisfaction is not distributed evenly between males and females and across faculties. In an end-of-the-year study carried out at Trent, for example, it was found that "females have significantly higher rating of the quality of support services and report greater overall satisfaction with Trent [than males]" (Wong, 1994b). Females at the University of Alberta reported more interest, more enjoyment, and more satisfaction than males (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). In addition to being more satisfied with aspects of The First-Year Experience identified in closed questions, in open-ended questions on the same topic females may mention different things than their male peers. For example, in an open-ended question focusing on the "pleasant surprises" of their first year at Queen's, "women [were] more likely to mention friendly people and good friends than anything else. Men . . . mention academic experiences, school spirit, and traditions as often as friendly people and good friends" (Knox, 1991).

As well as gender differences in satisfaction, evidence also suggests satisfaction varies from discipline to discipline or from faculty to faculty. At the University of Alberta, students in Science recorded the lowest overall satisfaction with the university (Holdaway & Kelloway, 1987). This pattern is repeated at York University. While 68% of students in Arts were satisfied with their overall program, the figure for Science is a lower 58% (Grayson, 1994c).

Attrition

In 1994, when they entered university, the vast majority of Group of Seven students believed that they were there for the duration. For example, only 3% said there was any probability of their being a permanent drop out. Only 6% believed that there was any chance that they would temporarily withdraw from their studies. On the other hand, 27% conceded the possibility of transferring to another institution before graduation.

Expectations aside, figures on the actual number of casualties of The First-Year Experience have recently been collected by Wong, and suggest,

once again, that large numbers of students may not be able to complete their educational plans in the fashion originally intended. Information from 13 Canadian universities shows that the average attrition rate is 24%. The range, however, is from 12% to 44% (Wong, 1994d).

Why do students leave after first year? The answer is not always clear. A study conducted at the University of Manitoba of students who transferred to another school for second year found that, "former scholarship students cited local unavailability of programs, large class size, and academic reputation as top reasons for transferring. By contrast, [non-scholarship] students identified the availability of practical or trade courses, proximity to home, and smaller size as. . . reasons for transferring to another institution" (University of Manitoba, 1992).

In an earlier study at the University of Manitoba, it had been found that of students who dropped out, 49% were employed full time. Of this group, the majority were engaged in unskilled labour in the food industry (fast food workers?) or in clerical jobs. Forty-one percent felt that they might return to the University of Manitoba at a later date. It is important to note that 88% did not originally plan to leave when they did, and that 49% felt inadequately prepared for university and dissatisfied with the quality of instruction. A substantial 56% believed that the university was not concerned with them as individuals; therefore, it is understandable that while they discussed their decision to leave with family and friends, leavers did not consult with faculty. Overall, the grades of leavers were relatively low (University of Manitoba, 1990; 1991).

The theme of absence of connectedness leading to attrition, as found at the University of Manitoba, was also discovered at Trent University. In that institution, although absolute differences were not large, "returning students report[ed] higher quality of interactions with professors, interactions with students, and quality of classroom experience" (Wong, 1994b). Also, while withdrawing students discussed their decision with friends, family, and other students, they did not approach faculty. In addition, lack of motivation was the most frequently cited reason for withdrawal.

The general findings of a study conducted at York University dovetail with those from Manitoba and Trent. In brief, students remaining in Science were somewhat more academically involved (for example, attended most of their classes, went to hear guest lecturers, etc.) than students who either left the university or transferred to other faculties at York. As a group, however, the marks of students staying in Science were not as high as those of students who left for other York faculties (Grayson, 1993c).

Instead of dealing with the question of connectedness, researchers at the University of Guelph focused on the impact of financial considerations on decisions not to return after first year. They found that money concerns were relatively unimportant in students' decisions. To quote, "transfer [students] tend to be neither worried about funds initially nor after two semesters. The stopouts tend to be both worried at enrollment and having problems with financing after two semesters. . . The system departures, however, tend to be both not worried initially and not having problems with financing education after two semesters" (Gilbert & Auger, 1988a, p. 17). Findings such as these are contrary to accounts of student departure frequently discussed in the popular press and in university settings.

While the phenomenon of course dropping is not the same as attrition, in recent years it has received increasing notice both inside and outside of the university. Quite simply, in many institutions, the number of annual courses taken by students has declined. How can this be explained?

A full answer will not be attempted. Suffice it to say that in hard economic times the need to work is frequently cited as an explanation. However, in his study of the University of Calgary in the 1970s, when the economy was much better than it is now, Meyers found that course dropping was a rational strategy adopted by students to ensure that they maintained a reasonable grade point average (Meyers, 1979).

Recent research at Carleton University is consistent with this view. In this institution, the mean course load had dropped from 4.1 in 1987-88 to 3.9 in 1990-91. Those who dropped courses tended to have lower entering marks than those who maintained a steady course load. Nonetheless, it is speculated that students may have registered in more courses than they planned to complete so they could drop some. "Viewed from this perspective," it is argued that course reduction "becomes a rational strategy for enhancing the student's university experience in a variety of ways," presumably including the maintenance of high marks (Dence, 1994, p. 11).

While this view is plausible, it still does not provide an adequate explanation for why such a large number of first-year students drop courses. At York University, unpublished research on students in the Faculty of Arts focused on the possibility that working part-time necessitated course dropping. However, holding high school marks, amount of contact with faculty and staff, and academic and social involvement constant, hours of outside employment had very little impact on the number of courses dropped in first year. What did account for 16% of the variance in the number of courses dropped was the amount of academic involvement of students. In other words, if students were academically involved, even if they worked long hours, they would be unlikely to drop courses.

Experiences and Outcomes

Research carried out in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science at York University attempted to assess the impact of what goes on in the university on certain outcomes, controlling for such variables as the high school marks of students. This step is necessary because otherwise we might attribute outcomes, like high first-year marks, to university practices whereas in actuality they are a function of how well students learned in high school. The studied outcomes included first-year marks, satisfaction with marks, satisfaction with the Science program, increases in tolerance, preference for independent learning, commitments to university education, increases in knowledge of science, intellectual development, and the intention of returning to the university. Overall, the research indicated that the quality of the classroom experience, along with the level of academic involvement, contributed most consistently to the outcomes under consideration. Importantly, these are areas in which the institution can make changes that will have the result of improving The First-Year Experience, and at the same time, contribute to desired outcomes (Grayson, 1994b).

Other research of a similar nature focused on the extent to which the experiences of different racial and ethnic groups were similar or different, and the degree to which experiences contributed to academic performance, intellectual development, increases in knowledge of a particular subject matter, and the intention to return to the institution in second year. In this case, it was found that individuals of different groups did have different experiences in the university, and that experiences were related to outcomes; however, students' race per se had virtually no impact on outcomes. For example, a race variable explained only 1% of the variance for intellectual development and increases in knowledge, and none of the variance in intention to return to the institution and first-year grade point average. By way of contrast, variables related to the classroom (satisfaction with instruction, being exposed to a variety of perspectives, and believing topics covered are relevant to career success) explained a considerable amount of the total variance in intellectual development—12% to be precise (Grayson, 1994a).

The benefit of research of this nature is that it enables us to identify the types of experiences that contribute to desired outcomes. Once such experiences have been identified, it is possible to introduce policies that will enhance them and, eventually, improve student outcomes. However, because the circumstances of students vary from one university to another, and because university policies and practices differ, we should not automatically assume that the results of research conducted in one institution necessarily apply elsewhere.

Conclusion

At stated in the Introduction, the objective of this chapter was to synthesize information on

The First-Year Experience in Canadian universities in an attempt to emphasized similarities and differences in The First-Year Experience. As a result, charges can be made that potential differences between large and small universities have been largely glossed over; an inadequate amount of time has been spent on differences between males and females; and important differences between students enrolled in different disciplines have been overlooked. Such charges are warranted; however, there is an explanation. Quite simply, space constraints precluded dealing with each of these important matters in detail. In essence, an overview of the landscape rather than a detailed topography has been provided.

In conclusion, the observations of the preceding pages will not be repeated; however, some general points that emerge from an overview of The First-Year Experience can be emphasized:

- Students entering Canadian universities come from a wide variety of socio-economic and ethno-racial backgrounds.
- The expectations of students entering the first year appear to be based on their years in high school rather than on sound knowledge of what awaits them.
- First-year students seem to be minimally involved in the institution apart from attending classes. To the degree that involvement is a desirable experience in itself, and contributes to first-year outcomes, lack of participation is a problem.
- While contacts with faculty are limited, in general they appear to be positive experiences.
- For the large numbers of first-year students who live at home with their parents, the transition to university may not involve the re-ordering of life's priorities
- Students who live in residence generally have higher quality experiences than those who live off campus.
- The First-Year Experience is a source of stress for many students.
- Large numbers, if not the majority, of first-year students work.
- In terms of marks, the vast majority of first-year students do not achieve their beginning-of-the-year objectives; nonetheless, overall, students are satisfied with The First-Year Experience.
- The majority of students make it through first year and proceed to second.

The foregoing conclusions have implications for policies that would enhance The First-Year Experience for Canadian students. In some universities such policies have already been put in place. Their nature and effectiveness will be discussed in later chapters.

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Chapter Five

Programs and Services for First-Year Students in Canadian Universities

Introduction

The previous chapter described first-year university students and their experiences. This chapter describes the programs, services and centres targeted to first-year students at Canadian universities and university colleges. It outlines the extent to which various programs and services are offered, and provides details and examples of their delivery characteristics. Delivery features include such aspects as voluntary/compulsory, target population, degree credit, contact hours, financial and delivery responsibility, cost to student, and program assessment and evaluation. The chapter concludes with an examination of the institutional climate under which these programs and services are delivered. Forty-one universities provided a wealth of information on their first-year programs and services.

Overview of Programs and Services

All undergraduate institutions provide unique support services for first-year students, but a number of common elements emerged from the responses. In general, first-year programs provide support services based on student background characteristics or perceived needs, social integration, skill workshops, and information on disciplines, resources, and administrative processes. In addition to an extensive range of services (see Table 2), respondents also identified first-year programming not included in the questionnaire.

Almost all universities offered liaison services, academic advising, career and personal counselling, faculty development, and residence life programs. First-Year Experience (or University 101) courses, introductory discipline or survey courses integrating First-Year Experience concepts, and course cluster formations utilized to support discipline integration, were much less common.

Extensive institutional resources are entrusted to pre- and post-admission liaison and orientation for high school students and their parents. A wide variety of events are hosted on campus, delivered in secondary schools, and broadcast to key locations. Alumni and student volunteers routinely support institutional staff in the delivery of services to individuals and small groups. At the University of Western Ontario, these services have been centralized in a "First-Year Office."

Various forms of media are used to deliver information, including videos, satellite broadcasts, and internet services. Both Carleton University and Memorial University of Newfoundland, have designed a video introduction to campus services. Mount Allison University delivers a satellite presentation to remote locations titled "The U in You." The University of Victoria provides a tour of the campus on the World Wide Web (WWW). Given recent institutional concern about enrollment and enrollment management, it is not surprising that liaison activities are recruitment and integration-oriented.

Liaison Prior to Admission

Liaison prior to admission is usually scheduled in concert with an administrative process. Regularly scheduled hours, days, or weekends at predetermined sites are common. The dominant target population is the secondary (or high school) student. Only two respondents identified the target as "first-year students" and the "general public." Other target groups are parents, guidance counselors, transfer students, students with disabilities, aboriginal students, and students interested in a particular profession, discipline, or major. Most institutions contact hundreds to thousands of individuals, depending on the size of the institution and the number of participating faculty, staff, student, corporate, and alumni volunteers.

Undergraduate liaison is most frequently designed and delivered by High School Liaison

Table 1
University Programs and Services Offered (N = 58)

Type of Program, Service, Centre	Institutions Offering (%)	Institutions Not Offering (%)	Total Responses (%)
Prior to Admission	98	2	41
Orientation	100	0	40
Family and Support Networks	82	18	38
Equity Access	86	14	37
Aboriginal Student Services	73	17	37
Race/Ethnic/Cultural	72	28	36
Gender	71	29	35
Academic Advising	100	0	40
Course Placement	86	14	36
Skills Assessment	63	37	38
Language Development	78	22	36
Mathematics Development	67	33	36
Learning Skills Centre	84	16	38
Short-term Success Seminar	81	19	36
Introductory Discipline Course	58	42	33
University 101 Term Course	38	62	32
Course Cluster Formation	59	41	32
Student Cohort Formation	65	35	37
Tutoring	67	33	36
Career Counseling	100	0	40
Personal Counseling	100	0	40
Faculty/Teaching Development	97	3	35
Residence Life	92	8	36

Offices. Discipline-specific liaison is normally guided by a dean's office, college, department, or senior administrative unit. The Students' Union and Alumni Associations frequently assist in the delivery of the service. A communications office was listed once as the unit responsible for liaison activities. One respondent acknowledged that liaison is provided by anyone who answers phones and directs individuals to the services of the institution.

The number of contacts is often compared to the number of admissions, or first-year student registrations, in the evaluation of liaison services. Participants at liaison functions and events are frequently asked to complete surveys designed to measure their satisfaction, evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery, and provide recommendations for improvement.

Orientation

All institutions provide a form of orientation after admission, but the definition of orientation varies widely. It was described as a single event, a series of events throughout the year, and as a first-semester or year-long course. Newly admitted students are given an opportunity to volunteer their registration in events, programs, and workshops, while some students are required to register in a first-semester orientation course in their discipline.

Orientation events are usually designed for the newly admitted high school student. Special orientation events are designed to meet the needs of target populations, including mature students, students in residences, international students, and students with disabilities. If the orientation program was described as "optional," attendance was as low as 10% of the admitted population. If the program was an integral part of first-year programming, 100% attendance was reported. Most orientation activities are scheduled in concert with administrative deadlines or processes.

Orientation is most frequently administered by student affairs/services and college or dean's offices, and is typically delivered by the student service staff, senior students, faculty, students from representative target groups, peer advisors, academic advisors, and learning resource staff. Although an exact comparison could not be determined from the responses, the number of senior students seemed to be greater than or equal to the number of institutional staff involved in the delivery of orientation.

Orientation services are frequently summarized in committee reports. While participation rates are the most common measure, a variety of participant surveys were submitted. The surveys measure background characteristics, satisfaction, study skills, and knowledge about the institution. Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected. For example, Mount Allison, Guelph, and New Brunswick used questionnaires asking participants to rate the quality of the events, as well as open-ended questions such as, "Which parts of orientation did you particularly like?" or, "Are there other areas/issues that you would like to see addressed?"

Family Involvement

Information sessions, days, and weekends are routinely provided to parents of first-year students at 80% of the respondent institutions. While some institutions report that almost all parents attend, others report only 35% of parents attend. Other target supports include families of entering and continuing students, support persons, relatives, spouses, and hosts of foreign students, incoming residents, and guardians. Sessions are delivered on the weekend and can last from one evening to as long as three days. Acadia University organizes a summer orientation for parents and relatives; the University of Saskatchewan organizes a spouse program for foreign students; and the University of New Brunswick hosts a family orientation approximately two weeks before the start of the semester.

Parent programs are most frequently administered by the college offices, student services, or the high school liaison office. These programs are delivered by professional staff from the division of student affairs/services, student volunteers, communications staff, external relations office staff, the registrar's office, the academic advising unit, student resident staff, student government representatives, faculty, and liaison alumni office staff.

The majority of information sessions, receptions, and tours are available free of charge, but when an event involves publications, handouts, and lodging or food services, a fee is charged. At the University of Western Ontario, the weekend program is priced at $137.00 for two parents of the same student.

Equity Access Programs

A majority of universities (86%) offer equity access programs. Equity access is defined as a service for individuals with disabilities, students with special needs (e.g., visual, auditory, and placement services), and populations who experience barriers to postsecondary education, including aboriginal students and women. At Ryerson Polytechnical University, the office is titled "Access Centre," while at Université de Moncton, the "Service Etudiant de Besoin Speciaux" serves the needs of students seeking equity access. At St. Mary's University, the Atlantic Centre for Disabled Students helps to integrate students with disabilities.

Visible minorities, aboriginal students, women, international, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and mature students are listed as target populations. At York University there is a "Centre for Race and Ethnic Relations," and at the University of Waterloo, the Office of Ethical Behaviour and Human Rights addresses the needs of these populations. Lakehead University supports an "Anti-racism" project; Concordia University maintains a variety of ethnic clubs; and St. Francis Xavier University offers a multicultural mentor program for ethnic minorities. At the University of Ottawa, 150 volunteers organize an International Week.

Aboriginal Student Programs

Aboriginal student services were highly individualized where student numbers are few (N = 6), and extensive where federated colleges, native studies courses, and special initiatives are instituted. This population includes: first-year native, first-nation or aboriginal students, Metis, students of colour; and persons of the first nation and Amerindiennes (Fr.). The services are administered by student services, educational and employment equity office, federated colleges, native studies departments (Centre d'etudes Amerindiennes), faculty offices, and indigenous learning services, and are commonly delivered by volunteer and paid students, deans, federated college staff, native student advisors and counsellors, and aboriginal professionals.

Extensive aboriginal services and academic programs are available at the University of Saskatchewan, where the aboriginal population is estimated to be 1,600 students (10% of the total populations). For example, programs include: the Program of Legal Studies for Aboriginal People, the Native Law Centre, Indigenous Business Certificate Program, Northern Teacher Education, National Native Access Program to Nursing, and affirmative action programs at the college level. At the University of Regina, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College provides degree programs in education, Indian social work, arts, and fine arts throughout Saskatchewan. Native support services, languages, history, literature, fine art, and culture are provided.

Race/Ethnic/Cultural Programs

Race relation committees, international student advisors, ethnic clubs, anti-racism projects, multicultural mentors, drop-in centres, cultural societies, English as a Second Language, and exchange programs deliver services to all students including foreigners, aboriginals, survivors, students of colour, and ethnic groups. Clubs and student organizations provide social events, discussion groups, and orientation sessions.

A few equity access committees report on policy matters, but evaluation usually involves admission statistics, client surveys, placement test results, and retention studies. Smaller programs and services are evaluated through anecdotal feedback, number of participants, and surveys. Retention statistics, student satisfaction, and program reviews are used to evaluate the success of services provided by colleges and faculties.

Gender Programs

Courses, such as "Sex, Gender, and Society," and "Women's Studies," as well as rape aggression defense, provide another form of educational equity. These services are generally

delivered through offices (e.g., gender issues offices, women's centres, centres for gay, lesbian, and bisexual students), committees, and associations (e.g., Women in Engineering, Women in Law, Women in Medicine, and a Social Issues Awareness Program). The services are voluntary and directed at students, faculty, staff, female faculty and staff, and women in particular disciplines or professional colleges. One respondent noted the service was designed for "men."

Depending on the service, demand at a Women's Centre can be as low as 3% of the student body to 6,000 requests for information. Programs are administered by, for example, Dean of Women at Queen's University of Kingston, Women's Centre coordinator and collective members at Simon Fraser University, Women's Study Department members at the University of Calgary, the Sexual Harassment Officer at the University of Regina, and the President's Office at Mount Allison University. Delivery of the programs is provided by faculty, student service staff, student volunteers, and collective or committee members.

Courses are evaluated through program reviews, support and feedback from participants, focus groups, and participant surveys. Committee or student union services are evaluated by reports to the institution and student body.

Course Placement/Assessment

Students who lack requisite courses, or who do not meet a minimum academic standard, may be asked to write a placement test prior to registration in courses. Students whose first language is not the language of instruction at a particular institution may be required to write a language admission test (e.g., TOEFL). Tests of literacy and numeracy are less frequent and have been discontinued at some institutions, including Brock University and Memorial University.

As Canada is a bilingual country, French and English language placement tests are administered as both a first and second language. For example, at Université Laval, where the language of instruction is French, a French language test is administered, whereas at the University of Winnipeg, an English language test is administered. At Augustana University College, language placement tests include German and Norwegian.

Institution specific admission or transfer tests were also required for a variety of departments, faculties, and colleges, including Education, Music, Mathematics, and Medicine. Results of placement tests were used for advanced placement or course waivers. Institutionally designed tests are normally free, though placement in a lower level course may result in additional tuition.

Academic Advising

All respondents to the survey noted an institutional responsibility to provide academic advice; however, the advice was not necessarily compulsory prior to registration in courses. The first-year, non-declared, and declared major student populations are usual targets when academic advice is compulsory. At the Université de Moncton, students seek academic advice at any time throughout the academic year, whereas at Trent University, students must seek an advisor before registration. Most academic advisors are full-time faculty members or university-educated staff.

Some institutions distinguish between academic advice (degree selection) and registration advice (timetabling and selection of courses). Academic advice is routinely available on demand, while registration advice is usually tied to the registration process. The service may be provided by the Registrar's Office, Counseling Services, Academic and Student Service Centre, or degree program offices. At the University of Prince Edward Island, academic advice is available at a First-Year Advisement Centre.

Surveys on student first-year experience often include questions about student satisfaction with academic advising. The perceived quality of academic advice is also correlated with retention at some institutions.

Language/Math Development

Language, mathematics, and learning support services were available at 80% of the respondent

institutions. Generic services are available to all students, and are coupled with specialized services designed to serve particular student traits, for example, foreign students or students whose first language is not the language of instruction.

All institutions provide either organized or ad hoc tutorial assistance by discipline, particularly in the areas of writing and mathematics. Informal assistance is provided by students' associations and student volunteers; formal assistance, by disciplines and faculties. Seven institutions described writing centres designed for all students. Nine institutions described mathematics centres. Support for other disciplines include the Science Assistance Centre at McMaster University, and the subject area help centres at the University of Alberta.

Test results are administered by colleges, faculties, counseling services, registrar's offices, and student services, and are delivered by admissions or liaison staff, academic counselors, faculty, and learning specialists. Research into the success of academic assessment includes studies which track the academic performance of students into the disciplines, as well as pre- and post-measures of academic performance. Evaluation of the programs varies widely. Some institutions use grades to evaluate the success of the program; others rely on anecdotal comments from the students.

Learning Skills Centres

Learning centres were described at 15 institutions. Counselling Services frequently deliver learning skill sessions or workshops. In three locations, learning skills were identified for students at risk, mature students, students on academic probation, students who identify that they are in difficulty, and learning disabled students. For example, Wilfrid Laurier University identified a "remedial study skill program," whereas Acadia University provides learning skill seminars for first-year scholarship students. At Concordia University, tests are used to assess learning disabilities, whereas at the University of Victoria, students in a learning skills course are required to complete an "Inventory of Study Behaviours."

At institutions across Canada, anywhere from 5% to 40% of the students voluntarily participate in Learning Centre activities. Volunteer and paid students deliver the majority of the services. The centre is usually advertised as a service for students seeking to improve their academic record. At the University of Windsor, learning and study skill workshops are delivered to 2,000 students who voluntarily enroll and pay $3.00 per session. The staff of the Academic Advisory Centre, alongside trained students, deliver this program throughout the year. The success of skill development centres is measured by numbers of participants, by pre- and post skill test skills, course or session evaluation, retention, and a measure of satisfaction with the service.

Success Seminars

Most responding institutions (81%) have a short term session or workshop on an applied skill that was delivered by counselling and learning skill services, campus residences, and faculty advising centres. Students usually volunteer their participation in sessions lasting from one hour to a full semester. Student service professionals (specialists in the fields of counselling, learning skills, student development, and services) instruct students in areas of leadership development, assertiveness, team building, public speaking, study skills, library skills, career planning, student life, academic success, writing skills, critical thinking, and computer skills.

University/College 101 Course

Courses based on University 101 at the University of South Carolina have been considered at many Canadian postsecondary institutions but exist at only three Canadian universities. "University 100" at the University of Prince Edward Island, "Introduction to Higher Learning (58-150)" at the University of Guelph, and "University 099.111" at St. John's College, the University of Manitoba are examples of approved degree credit courses. These courses focus on the history of higher education and the development of critical thinking and rational discourse. "Gen 101 - the first-year seminar" at Augustana University College, and "UEPS-001" at the University of Regina, are samples of semester seminars

developed to cover the same content as the degree credit courses although the institutions did not approve the course proposals for degree credit.

Discipline/Survey Course with First-Year Experience Content

First-year student development topics were identified in introductory discipline courses at St. Thomas University and the Université du Quebec à Chicoutimi; in introductory professional courses (e.g., engineering, education, and business) at the University of Alberta; and in liberal arts courses such as Arts 1000 at the University of New Brunswick. These courses are usually compulsory and are delivered by faculty and teaching assistants.

Course Cluster Formation

A variety of flexible designs in course structure illustrate the ability of institutions to respond to first-year themes. Student services and academics collaborate in the development of new structures through first-year offices, committees studying The First-Year Experience, and unit or departmental reviews. Senior administrative officers, such as the vice-president or provost (academic), play key roles in initiating change.

To fulfill the objective of a successful academic experience in the first year through course structures, institutions have:

- Changed organizational and reporting structures supporting course delivery (e.g., Office of the First-Year at the University of Guelph)
- Redesigned packages of existing and new seminars and services (e.g., Brock 101 at Brock University and First-Year Seminars at the University of Toronto)
- Included First-Year Experience objectives in introductory courses (e.g., ISDS 102 at Trinity Western University)
- Introduced new courses (e.g., University 100 at the University of Prince Edward Island)
- Redesigned the first year of degree programs to produce a common first year (e.g., the University of Manitoba)

Other institutions reviewing and proposing significant changes to The First-Year Experience include Carleton University, McGill University , York University, and the University of Winnipeg.

Other changes noted in the submissions include the grouping of interdisciplinary seminars or courses, singular courses taught by a variety of professors, and a set of courses to be completed in the first year of the program. Examples include "Akademia" at the University of Guelph, "Aquinas" at St. Thomas University, and "Chelsea" at St. Thomas Moore College at the University of Saskatchewan.

The number and percentage of students enrolled are dependent upon the compulsory or elective design of the program. The evaluation of course delivery structures is achieved through participant evaluations, student experience surveys, final examinations, assignments, attendance and registration patterns, qualitative journal submissions, overall academic performance, faculty action, graduation rates, and retention.

Student Cohort Formation and Peer Tutoring

There are two distinct student structures: one, designed by the institution as a result of the timetabling or course structure of the degree program; the other, the formal and informal grouping of all students to support the development of student life. First-year students may engage in peer relationships through membership in study groups and clubs or associations based on discipline, faculty, residence, full/part-time status, interest, scholarship, age group, ethnicity, race, language, citizenship, gender, and religion. At Memorial University of Newfoundland, first-year students formed FUSS (First-Year University Student Society) and SOTA (Students Older Than Average) to support adjustment through a series of activities.

A number of institutions provide compulsory one-to-one student mentor relationships with faculty members. For example, at St. Francis

Xavier University, the Canada Scholars Mentor Club paired faculty and scholarship students. At other universities, faculty and student mentorships are organized by discipline (e.g., Queen's University of Kingston, McMaster University, and the Université du Quebec à Montreal and à Chicoutimi).

Most mentor programs are voluntarily delivered by senior students. At the University of Calgary, Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS) are organized by The First-Year Experience Coordinator and student leaders. St. Francis Xavier University offers a peer-tutoring society. At both Wilfrid Laurier University and Mount Allison University, the residence environment is used to develop peer relationships between students.

A Peer Support Centre is available at the University of Victoria. Peer support is available at other institutions through faculty and department offices, the Students' Union, Student Services/Affairs, Extension, and Learning Skills Centres. Fees for such services vary widely. Many peer tutors are paid hourly outside the university administrative structures. Ad hoc services are seldom evaluated beyond numbers of participants and participant evaluations. Formal programs are subject to review.

Career and Personal Counselling

All institutions have career and personal counselling centres designed to support the personal and professional development of students. The vast majority of publications attached to survey responses were counselling centre and employment service publications. Services ranged from individual appointments to a wide variety of workshops. The services are delivered by therapists, psychologists, social workers, counsellors, guidance counsellors, teachers, professors, interns, and student volunteers. Services are administered by Student Services, Counselling and Student Life Centres, Placement Career Services, Student Employment Centres, Cooperative Education, and Student Development Centres.

Some professional faculties design and deliver career services but Student Services are responsible for the majority of therapeutic and applied skill services. Other services available at counselling centres include sexual assault (or harassment) offices and disability counsellors. Fees for services may be collected through an ancillary fee or general tuition revenue. Special events, workshops, and tests incur additional fees to the student.

The approach to the delivery of a broad range of academic, social, cultural, and personal service is highly individualized. Dependent upon delivery characteristics, the services may be used by all or some students. The University of Alberta indicated that 75% of the students use career and personal support services, whereas the University of Winnipeg, University of Guelph, Université du Quebec à Montreal, Université de Moncton, Trent University, and Mount Allison University report 10% to 15% usage.

Counselling and employment services are evaluated by numbers of participants, participant evaluation, anecdotal response, professional evaluation of employees, division reviews, and year-end reports. The effectiveness of employment services is evaluated at York University, where the percentage of students placed in full-time positions after graduation is calculated, and at Wilfrid Laurier University, where employers of graduates are surveyed.

Faculty/Teaching Development

Teaching development services are available at 87.1% of the respondent institutions. These units consult with instructors and departments, present workshops, publish teaching resources, administer grants, reward excellence, guide assessment, and facilitate liaison. Twelve institutions have centres for the development of teaching (e.g., Instructional Development Office); five have centres for the development of teaching and learning (e.g., Teaching and Learning Resource Centre); eleven deliver workshops or sessions (e.g., New Faculty Orientation Seminars); and four have committees to review teaching, such as Group to Renew and Enhance Effective Teaching (GREET) at Ryerson Polytechnical University.

Developmental activity at the institutions ranges from biannual sessions to regular

workshops; from group to peer consultation; from advisory committees to offices providing professional support services. The Senate Committee on Enhancement of Teaching (SCENT) at the University of Prince Edward Island organizes periodic workshops and consultations. The University of Guelph ensures student representation on advisory committees. "Teaching in Focus" provides continuous weekly meetings at the University of Lethbridge. Ryerson Polytechnical University supports the development of teaching by creating an e-mail dialogue on an internal listserv, TEACHNET. The University of New Brunswick provides in-service practical and theoretical training in tertiary level teaching to graduate students that results in a Diploma in University Teaching. At the University of Ottawa, a graduate course on teaching techniques has been approved. The ASSET Group (Arts and Science Students for Excellence in Teaching) at the University of Toronto facilitate students' liaison with faculty.

The Université d'Ottawa administered a Teaching Learning Grants Program that awarded $120,000 to 43 projects in the last four years. Full-time regular faculty members are eligible to apply for a grant "to increase the effectiveness of both teaching and learning and to encourage innovations in teaching and course instruction." In addition, undergraduate teaching awards are available at many institutions and supported by national organizations.

At McGill University, staff at the Centre for University Teaching and Learning prepare papers and articles on teaching and learning research, policy, and practice. The University of Victoria produces faculty instructional videos. At Concordia College, training is compulsory for first-time university instructors of first-year students. The University of Manitoba wrote a guide to university teaching.

Most often, faculty are assigned to both mentors and student teaching assistants. All faculty development programs are voluntary, and three of the programs included in this study exclusively targeted new faculty or graduate students. Teaching and learning services are evaluated through participant response and numbers of participants. Course and professor evaluations were not usually linked to the service, although seminar topics may be selected based on student response.

Residence Life

Residence life programs provide extensive support for all aspects of student life (e.g., workshops on study skills, health/wellness, addiction, sexual assault, eating disorders, disability awareness, discrimination, anti-racism). Residence life services are provided by professional residence staff and paraprofessional student dons, residence tutors, peer support networks, and volunteer students. Most programs strongly encourage participation despite a request for voluntary participation. The number of students who participate appears to be related to the extent of the program. If floor meetings are compulsory, all students attend. If attendance is voluntary, few students participate. Residence life surveys, participant evaluations, numbers of participants, and year-end reports are completed at 12 of the 36 respondent institutions.

At the University of Western Ontario, the goals of residence life programs are to develop community, to educate, to involve students in their learning, and to provide an outlet for the release of emotions. Their focus areas include academic, career, cultural diversity, emotional, physical, political, safety, sexuality, security, social, and spiritual issues. Residence life programs frequently embody a holistic transition of students to academic life.

Additional First-Year Programs, Services, and Centres

Additional supports include ceremonial services, recreational and competitive sports, cooperative education, chaplains, and library services. Other respondents noted that first-year proposals were "in progress" such as the deliberations of the "Academic Policy and Planning Committee on the First Year" at McGill University.

Attachments to the responses included videos, workbooks, pamphlets, general calendars, WWW and Gopher addresses, and published or

unpublished documents. The chief publishers were student services and faculty offices. A number of excellent submissions summarized departmental services and reports illustrating how the institution, together with the departments, is able to meet and exceed the needs of any first-year student. The Faculty of Arts Newsletter from York University contains an excellent report from the "Task Force on Faculties, Colleges, and The First-Year Experience" (April, 1996).

Common Delivery Characteristics

Responsibility for The First-Year Experience is commonly attributed to the divisions of student services. Despite the variation in organization of first-year programs, the majority of the programs, services, and centres are delivered by student service professionals and student volunteers prior to the start of the semester, and focus on preparing the admitted high school student and supporting parent for the first year. Other students are targeted by their background characteristics.

Programs, services, and centres designed by student service professionals are typically holistic in nature, whereas undergraduate degree programs are academic in their approach. Where First-Year Experience initiatives have been formally considered by the institution there is a blending of approaches and improved dialogue between the units sharing responsibility. This improved dialogue encouraged student participation and integration. Degree programs increasingly are designed to support and encourage student and academic development.

The majority of the first-year programs are supported through general tuition revenue; however, direct costs are frequently transferred to the student. A number of services were defined as activities and short term volunteer programs. As a result, students usually volunteer their participation. In general, first-year programs provide:

- Information on institutional resources and administrative processes
- Academic skills required to complete a degree
- Support services based on student background characteristics or perceived needs
- Knowledge about disciplines and professions
- Social integration.

The following two comments are instructive:

> As you can ascertain, we do not have a well-developed package for first-year students.

> The response from the various departments suggests that a lot of experimentation in program development in support of The First-Year Experience is taking place. What information, how much, and when to provide it are some of the questions departments are asking. It seems that students want "just in time" information instead of receiving all the information at once.

Institutional Climate

Survey respondents were asked to describe "climate" in terms of student involvement in the planning of student integration and the delivery of technological supports for integration of first-year students. They were also asked to identify barriers to implementing first-year support, and to describe the implementation of collaborative efforts to enhance The First-Year Experience.

Student Association Involvement

Most responding universities (72%) indicated that student associations or unions were actively involved in first-year student integration. Student clubs, societies, unions, mentors, tutors, and institutional committees develop, support, and deliver a wide range of social events and educational activities. A respondent from the University of New Brunswick (UNB) notes:

> The UNB Orientation Program is supported financially and philosophically by the Dean of Students Office, UNB Student Union, and Alumni Affairs. The executive committee includes over 200 students per year. They deliver a week-long award winning

orientation program to 1200 first-year and international students. Planning, fund raising, training, and organizing is year-round. Peer Mentors meet their students during orientation week, and remain in contact through the term, in order to help the first-year student successfully adjust.

Student organizations were more frequently involved in orientation as a social, rather than educational, activity. At York University, the Network Advising Program recruits 300 students. These students are "the backbone to mentoring first-year students in non-academic matters." At Memorial University of Newfoundland, student involvement in orientation brought together a range of individuals, including residence staff, members of the student union, student orientation coordinators, faculty, student affairs and services professionals, community sponsors, alumni, and approximately 200 volunteers.

Where student involvement was given a lower rating, respondents identified student integration as peripheral (e.g., "student association representatives provide a brief welcome and overview at orientation activities"). While students support institutional activities, they are typically not perceived as being responsible for service delivery, nor are they relied upon to provide essential leadership in support of first-year student integration.

Technological Support of First-Year Initiatives

According to 40% of respondents, technology provides administrative support and information but does not deliver service or provide first-year student integration. Technology increases the efficiency of administrative services but does not increase the understanding of programs and the institution.

Registration by telephone, payment of fees by direct debit, and on-line question and answers reduce bureaucratic and administrative procedures. Student information systems, e-mail, CD-ROM technology, WWW and Gopher sites provide tools for students to ask questions about their academic record, financial statements, course timetables and descriptions, telephone directories, campus maps, library resources, and scholarships. Security cards provide access to the library, photocopiers, and food services.

At the University of New Brunswick, students change their local address on-line. A tour of the campus is available on the WWW at the University of Victoria. At the Université du Quebec, 37,000 students register by telephone. Electronic data transfer is possible between high schools and postsecondary institutions in Alberta. At the University of Ottawa, "Info-campus" answers questions on a variety of topics. At the University of Toronto, the Campus Life Electronic Bulletin Board Services provides students, student governments, and recognized student groups with electronic mail, conferences, and file sharing. One respondent noted, "We have come to rely on technology in a major way - not only to deal with the budget, but also to make information available to students from off-campus locations, which enables us to facilitate dissemination and to accommodate very disparate schedules."

Barriers and Obstacles to Implementation

Barriers and obstacles are both attitudinal (e.g., resistance to collaborate or change) and material (e.g., limited resources). In order of frequency, the obstacles identified by 60% of the respondents are:

- Financial
- Resistance to change
- Scheduling
- Workloads
- Space constraints
- Insufficient enrollment in first-year initiatives
- Structural issues that fragment service delivery
- Unwillingness to centrally coordinate services.

One survey respondent stated:

> The first-year program is constrained by multiple demands on faculty, and has certainly been exacerbated in recent years by the erosion of available free time. If it were possible to consider student faculty interaction on a par with other professional contributions, such as committee work, it would further the overall goal of promoting involvement. . . . New services are not hard to get going, but programs requiring attendance are tough.

Another noted that "a shift in philosophy" would be required to implement a new program. Yet another respondent commented that even with "a number of invaluable mechanisms in place . . . the overall effect cannot be measured, much less quantified." Lack of administrative leadership, the priority of more pressing needs, and little acceptance of University 101 were also listed mentioned. Other respondents focused on the responsibility of the faculty, not the institution, for student integration. Communicating to students about the value of first-year initiatives was also listed as a barrier.

Universities that did not experience barriers in developing first-year programs attribute the following factors to their success:

- Extended periods of time (five years) to explore and develop first-year programming
- Institutional support for first-year students
- Creation of a first-year office
- Changes in the administrative structure to support the development of first-year programs
- Maximization of limited funds and human resources
- Voluntary support of the students in delivering and registering in the programs.

One respondent was unable to identify barriers because new programs for first-year students had not yet been considered or developed.

Program and Service Cancellations

At the time of the survey, 78% of responding universities had not cancelled programs or services designed for students in their first year. However, three quarters of these institutions reported reductions in staff. Where services were cancelled, they were cancelled due to lack of participation, funding, staff, time, and space. Cancelled services include:

- Summer orientation
- Advising (first-year and peer)
- Tests of competency
- Remedial services (e.g., special needs orientation, a course for students who were asked to depart, a non-credit student success course)
- Study groups programs
- Computer workshops.

The cancellation of services does not necessarily produce negative outcomes. One respondent, reacting to the replacement of a standardized test with an interview, remarked that, "The overall result was a much more positive experience for students, who were much less stressed and more comfortable with the discussions, which replaced a purely impersonal test." Where a summer orientation program was eliminated and replaced with a fall program, it was found that students were able to retain skills and information that could be applied immediately, rather than having to wait a number of weeks to apply what they had learned.

Collaborative Effort

Collaborative efforts to support the first year were reported at 65% of the respondent institutions. Examples include:

- An orientation committee composed of faculty, staff, and students
- A general studies course delivered by faculty and student service personnel

- A Student Services Committee in a faculty
- An advisory committee including faculty members, university resource people, and student government representation.

Collaborative efforts may involve student affairs or services professionals, staff, faculty, students, senior executives, institutional researchers, parents, and alumni. Faculty deans initiated collaborative efforts through advisory committees, an internal first-year program, program reviews, and peer and faculty mentor groups. Senior academic officers supported changes to the first year by consolidating functions across disciplines, creating first-year or undergraduate experience committees or task forces, creating a first-year office, requesting first-year reviews across programs, developing an enrollment management advisory council, revisiting the goals of the institution, placing responsibility for the organization of first-year services on a senior officer, and ensuring the governing bodies review the performance of the institution in terms of the successes of their first-year students.

Besides a variety of orientation committees at the respondent institutions, the following unique committees are noted:

- Carleton University—First-Year Office, Faculty of Engineering
- McGill University—Academic Policy and Planning Committee on the First Year
- Memorial University of Newfoundland—First-Year Seminar Series Committee
- Queen's University of Kingston—Queen's 101 Advisory Committee
- University of Calgary—First-Year Experience Planning Committee
- University of Guelph—Office of the First Year
- University of New Brunswick—Enrolment Management Advisory Council
- University of Ottawa—First-Year Transition Committee and Program
- University of Toronto—Provost Advisor, Centre on the Undergraduate Experience
- University of Waterloo—Ad Hoc First-Year Transition Committee
- University of Western Ontario—First-Year Program Office, Student Development Centre
- Wilfrid Laurier University—First-Year Experience Committee
- York University—Vice-President (Academic) Review of The First-Year Experience

The University of Winnipeg, McGill University, University of Saskatchewan, York University, University of Manitoba, and the University of Alberta report new initiatives to coordinate the first year or undergraduate experience.

Observations and Conclusions

The amount of commitment and activity dedicated to the success of first-year students is impressive. All Canadian undergraduate institutions support student and academic development with liaison, orientation, academic, personal, and career services. Teaching and learning services are more recent additions. Responses and publications described the activities of services in great detail, although they often imply, rather than clearly indicate, the student outcome. While the institutions actively provide a wide range of programs, students still have the primary responsibility for using whatever services are offered.

Many services were designed to meet the perceived needs of a population rather than to serve the academic goals of the institution. Extensive effort went into both identifying targeted students and assessing their satisfaction levels with the programs or services offered. Proactive institutions tended to assume more responsibility for the outcomes of the first year. Instead of viewing student success or failure as simply the result of individual motivation and ability, these institutions felt strongly that their programs and activities could make measurable and significant contributions.

Most of the delivery of first-year experience programs is provided prior to the start of the first semester and relies on volunteer registration. The timing of the service has a direct effect on the amount of participation, with the highest level of participation reported during the normal academic year.

The definition of first-year support services varies widely. Where one institution provided an orientation course for credit, another referred to orientation as a non-credit activity. The organization and structure of these supports within the institution determine whether it is a cohesive response to an objective of the institution or an ad hoc activity by a department. While there was emerging support, in principle, for coherence and integration in first-year activities, the majority of responses indicated a minimal level of integration between administrative, student service, and faculty units.

Peer and mentor relationships played a key role in many first-year programs. At institutions with large residence populations and deliberate faculty involvement in student development (e.g., a task force), more attention was paid to the first year. Student volunteers deliver many first-year support services. Where students are key players in both the delivery and receipt mode of the first-year experience, the amount of training or attention given to student perception and knowledge of the institutions increases.

Chapter Six

Institutional Profiles

The following institutions are profiled for their unique or comprehensive approach to the first year at their respective institutions. The community college profiles include Champlain Regional College (Lennoxville, Quebec), Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology (Etobicoke, Ontario), and Red Deer College (Red Deer, Alberta). The university profiles include Memorial University of Newfoundland (St. John's, Newfoundland), University of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown, PEI), University of Guelph (Guelph, Ontario), University of Regina (Regina, Saskatchewan), and York University (North York, Ontario).

University 100 at the University of Prince Edward Island

By Andrew Robb

In the fall of 1986, the University of Prince Edward Island began offering two sections of a six-semester hour credit course designed specifically to better integrate first-year students into the academic, social, and cultural dimensions of the university. The course was given the title "University 100: An Introduction to University." Though very roughly modeled on the well-known University 101 freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina, it was largely the result of a planning exercise focusing on the needs of the island university in the mid-1980s.

The Institution

As the only university in the province, UPEI has a special mandate to serve the needs of the community. Although the 1980s saw the establishment of a school of veterinary medicine, the university defined itself primarily as an undergraduate teaching institution. Relatively open admissions policies, a high percentage of first-generation students, and a small residence population helped to shape the culture of the campus. Prince Edward Island is not only Canada's smallest province, but the most culturally homogenous. The student population reflected this. Full-time enrollment grew from just over 1800 in 1986 to a peak of about 2700 in 1992. The traditional faculties of arts, science, business administration, and education were supplemented in the early 1990s by a school of nursing. In 1986 over 90% of UPEI's students were from the Island; in 1995, more than 20% are from out-of-province.

The Planning Process

In the mid-1980s, many faculty, academic administrators, and student service professionals shared a concern that entering students were often not as well prepared for their university studies as they might be, and that significant numbers of students either dropped out during their first year or failed to return as second-year students. Beyond this, presentations

by Lee Noel and John Gardner, and a summer workshop for faculty centering on The First-Year Experience, convinced a core group that one solution might be to create a course which would address the affective as well as cognitive dimensions of a student's first year. A planning group drawn from the ranks of senior academic faculty, students, administrators, and student services devoted 18 months to both designing the course and seeking its approval. Working with the knowledge that any setback on the long and tortuous road to formal academic approval is typically fatal for any proposal, the group went to great lengths to consult widely, attract the support of well-respected legitimizers, and made every effort to accommodate the concerns of the various campus constituencies.

A number of fundamental decisions about the proposed course arose from reading literature on The First-Year Experience in America, and from assessing possibilities for the integration of principles applied in American institutions into the Canadian academic culture. Six principle assumptions were made based on this research. They were:

- As the recognition of quality and achievement in the university is based largely upon grades and academic credit, the course would have to be graded and carry academic credit.
- In order to be given credit, the course would have to both be worthy, and be perceived as worthy, of such credit.
- So that the course would not be the property of any existing department, the coordinator of the course would report jointly to the deans of arts and science, and be advised by a committee drawn from the various faculties.
- The course would not be compulsory, would be open only to first-year students, and be taught in classes no larger than 25, to be available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Teaching faculty would have to be specifically trained for the course.
- Implementation would be incremental, beginning with two sections which could be very carefully evaluated over a three-year initial period.

With these guiding principles in place, the task of designing the course and making decisions on the details of curriculum began. The course that emerged has remained fundamentally unchanged from 1986 to the present.

The Course

The course that began in 1986 had seven specific goals. Some were based on the findings of American students of The First-Year Experience, including Lee Upcraft, John Gardner, Lee Noel, Ernest Boyer, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini, and others came from the unique context of UPEI. They were:

- To enhance essential studentship skills
- To introduce students to the culture of the university, past and present
- To explore the modes of thinking in the university
- To enhance written and oral communication skills
- To develop library research and computer skills
- To enhance critical thinking and argumentation skills
- To assist in the growth of career and personal development goals.

Syllabi for the course include a wide variety of specific topics designed to achieve these goals. The small class size allows for individual and small group work, and every effort is made to build a supportive peer group within the course. Active, as opposed to passive teaching/learning techniques are the norm. Much time is devoted early in the first semester to building familiarity with the library and computer services through a series of hands-on exercises. Students are encouraged to use either their own computers or

campus facilities for their work, and most do. There is a great deal of various kinds of writing, usually on a weekly basis. Course journals, formal essays, reports on interviews, and research papers on careers are a few examples. Journals, in particular, serve as a useful way for faculty to stay in touch with the outside-the-classroom world of the first-year student. Skill enhancement in active listening, note taking, exam preparation, time management, and goal setting are all introduced. Critical thinking is taught and encouraged throughout the course as a skill that is fundamental to the entire range of academic and personal questions encountered by the student.

Various components of the course deal with the university itself as an object of study. Questions range from the very practical (Who is the dean and where do you find her?) to the epistemological (How do people in different disciplines seek to know and understand?). A good deal of attention is given to increasing confidence and skill in oral communications. Specific techniques include formal individual presentations, team seminar presentations, videotaping for feedback, and debating. Personal wellness and development is also given attention in the form of course components on sexuality and alcohol abuse (as well as other types of drug use) offered by local resource personnel. Career planning and personal growth are stimulated using a variety of interest and personality-type inventories. The course is graded on the basis of assignments, presentations, tests and exams, and participation, as is any other "normal" credit course. Grade patterns in the course are consistent with those of most introductory-level arts courses.

Training for instructors is based in the Faculty Development Institute, which is offered each summer at UPEI. The basic text for the course is Gardner, Jewler, Robb (Eds.) *Your First-Year Experience: Success Strategies for Canadian Students.* Since inception, the course has been taught by faculty from English, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, psychology, and student services.

Evaluation of the Course

Evaluation of the course was carried out in a variety of ways. Student course evaluations were used each semester to give faculty essential information on students' perception of the classroom experience. In addition, a senate committee examined the course after an initial three year period to determine how well it had achieved its stated goals. The response from both sources was positive. To facilitate the evaluation, a survey was done in 1991 of all those who had completed the course. Both open-ended and scaled responses to specific questions were invited. Course completers were overwhelmingly positive about the results. The top twelve benefits of the course were the following:

- Improved library/research skills
- Valuable as preparation for undergraduate studies
- Improved oral communications skills
- Increased knowledge of university support services
- Improved critical thinking/debating skills
- Useful in the context of other courses
- Improved note-taking/active listening skills
- Improved organizational skills
- Aided in the development of self-confidence
- Use of university support services
- Improved exam-taking skills
- Increased motivation to learn.

Respondents spoke about how the course assisted them in finding their way through first year, created a supportive peer group during the year, and provided the academic survival skills they needed.

Retention Rates

Data gathered by Paul Fidler at the University of South Carolina since the early 1970s suggests that there is a positive impact on retention of

students, especially from first to second year, for completers of the University 101 course. Other studies in the United States report similar findings. At UPEI, the tracking of retention and persistence to graduation was carried out from the beginning in order to study the impact, if any, of the course in these areas.

Table 1 shows the results to date. They suggest a significant impact on rates of retention. Even allowing for a degree of self-selection based on the first-come first-served enrollment in the course, the statistics reveal a consistent pattern, with University 100 completers returning as second-year students in significantly higher numbers.

Table 1
Retention Rates at UPEI

Year	University 100 (%)	UPEI (%)
1986	95	58
1987	85	58
1988	72	60
1989	86	62
1990	84	62
1991	77	61
1992	80	63
1993	81	60
1994	77	63

Graduation Rates

In terms of graduation rates, and number of years taken to graduate, University 100 completers also show significant differences from the university as a whole. From 1986 to 1990, completers were 7.4% ahead of others in terms of graduating in four years. The data confirm another fact of life for many students of the 1980s and 1990s, that the traditional four year path to graduation is typically now a five or six year path. The entry classes of 1986 through 1991 saw University 100 completers graduate in four or five years at a rate 28.4% higher than the rest of their entering class.

Conclusions

In their recent study, *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research (Jossey-Bass, 1991)*, Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini conclude that the first year of university is a time when

> . . . new identities and interpersonal networks must be constructed, and new academic and social structures, attitudes, values, and behaviours must be learned. This represents a major social and psychological transition. . . If successful, the orientation process can lead to earlier and more enduring involvement in the academic and social systems of an institution (p. 650).

They add that the first-year seminar is the preferred method of properly orienting the first-year students. The experience with University 100 at UPEI would seem to confirm these findings. The qualitative and quantitative data, as well as the day-to-day teaching/learning experience in the classroom, bear this out. Providing new students with a combination of skills, personal support, and opportunities to grow and learn in the context of a welcoming environment can have lasting and positive outcomes.

For more information, contact Andrew Robb, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PEI, (902) 566-0692.

The SCORE Program at Champlain Regional College - Lennoxville Campus

By Richard Konicki

Champlain-Lennoxville is a tuition-free public CEGEP (community college) of approximately 1200 students on Bishop University's campus in the area known as the Eastern Townships of Quebec. It is predominantly rural, although the city of Sherbrooke (pop. 100,000) is 5 kilometres away. About half the students are francophone, with varying degrees of fluency in English. The anglophone students are generally very comfortable in French, with functional bilingualism one of the hallmarks of this region. The majority of the students are enrolled in one of seven

two-year pre-university programs, while the rest are following a three-year career program, of which there are presently three. The student residence houses 315 students, and another 200-300 students live away from home in apartments or boarding houses in Lennoxville.

Guiding Principles/Context

One of the major reasons for the establishment of the CEGEP system in 1967 was to provide a "bridge" between the demands of high school and the rigors of university. The first-year university dropout rate was considered extremely high. However, despite the transitional nature of the CEGEP program and the goal of attempting to smooth over the bump between the secondary and postsecondary levels, the actual demands made on the students' time management skills, study skills, and numerous other educational and developmental skills are still considerably greater at CEGEP than they were in high school. It was in this context, and in the light of our own rather high first-year failure rate, that we developed a short program to introduce first-year students to CEGEP life and each other.

Description of Program

Borrowing liberally (and with permission) from the University of Guelph's START summer orientation program, members of the Student Services staff decided in 1985 to organize a short program along the same lines, adopting the name SCORE (Summer College Orientation Essentials). The format has not changed substantially since its inception.

Descriptive brochures are mailed to all first-year applicants, inviting them to participate in two and a half days of residence life, a campus tour, social and sports activities, model classes, and workshops on student life, which are held at the end of June. The attendance has ranged from a low of 17 students to a high of 35. The cost per student is $85, which includes two nights in residence, five meals, and a souvenir T-shirt or boxer shorts.

Two student monitors, one male and one female, are engaged at $200 each to animate the group, assist in the workshops and activities, provide a true student perspective on college life, and ensure that the rules of the program, particularly during the two evenings in the residence, are respected. The training for the student monitors, who are carefully selected from previous participants, is typically brief.

All the workshops are led by student services personnel, and the model classes are taught by academic personnel. The English placement test, which is required of all new students, is usually administered during this program to those who have not already taken it, and course selection is carried out with those not already registered.

At the end of the program we request that participants complete an evaluation form, which we then use to fine-tune the program for the next year. Another evaluation form is completed at the SCORE Reunion, usually a small reception held in November, to help determine if the program had some lasting benefit after two and a half months of the "real thing." The end-of-program evaluations are generally overwhelmingly positive.

The major benefit for many of the students is the chance to meet their peers before the fall rush, establishing social contacts, and often making living arrangements. The mid-fall evaluation is to verify whether the non-social aspects of SCORE have lasting value. Although not all SCORE students go on to succeed academically, it is reported that the program makes them more aware than most how to find help when they need it, and adjust to "the newness of it all" more quickly. Although the program is not limited to francophone students, in the last few years they have been in the majority in SCORE, presumably recognizing that this program will give them a head start on what could prove to be a very trying educational experience.

Problems and Possibilities

The largest single problem is not attracting the volume of students that could be handled during SCORE. Ideally, all first-year students would participate in one of several sessions spread over the summer. On the whole,

however, this college is very pleased with the program, and fully intends to continue it.

For more information, contact Richard Konicki, Champlain Regional College, Lennoxville, Quebec, (819) 564-3671.

Creating Partnerships for Growth at Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology
By Peter Dietsche

Humber College, located in southwestern Ontario, is a comprehensive college of applied arts and technology with approximately 11,000 full-time students enrolled in over 135 programs.

Guiding Principles/Context

The College promotes a proactive and integrated approach to student success and retention. Prior to entry, recruitment activities including liaison and articulation are designed to help students make informed college and program selection decisions. At entry, orientation activities integrate students into the college social and academic environments. Once first-year students are registered, support services ensure that critical individual student needs are met. In all instances, college staff attempt to initiate contact with students to make sure they obtain the appropriate support services.

Description of Program

Student success and retention are promoted, in part, by the Freshman Integration and Tracking (FIT) System, which was developed in response to empirical studies of student departure. Conceptualized within a "person-environment fit" model of educational outcomes, this research has resulted in measurement instruments and associated software designed to identify and facilitate the creation of individualized learning environments for new students.

The Partners in Education Inventory, administered at entry to the college, provides information on demographic characteristics, academic background, support needs, attitudes toward college education, and college of attendance for each new student. This inventory is used to do the following:

- Match and target college support services to self-identified student needs via a computer-generated "Partners in Education Report"
- Provide student needs information to college services staff and program faculty as the basis of a proactive/intrusive advising system
- Act as an "early-alert" system identifying students with a high probability of failure/departure in the first semester.

The student, faculty, and support service responses to this information promote the academic and social integration of new students and, in turn, retention and success.

The Student Experience Inventory, administered at mid-semester, constitutes the "tracking" component. This instrument provides information on the support needs, academic and extra-curricular behaviour, and perceptions and attitudes of individual students following their interaction with college academic and social environments, and is used to do the following:

- Match and target college support services to self-identified student needs via a second computer-generated "personalized advising letter"
- Provide student needs information to college services staff and program faculty as the basis of continued proactive/intrusive advising
- Act as an "early-alert" system identifying at a critical juncture those students with a high probability of failure/departure
- Identify students who have, since registration, undergone dramatic changes in their attitudes toward and perceptions of a college education.

Interventions based on this information are designed to further integrate the student, identify and solve problems before they precipitate departure decisions and, ultimately, increase student retention and success.

For more information, contact Peter Dietsche, Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, Etobicoke, Ontario, (416) 675-3111 Ext. 4029.

Problem-Solving Partnerships: An Intervention Strategy for At-Risk Students at Red Deer College

By Joanne Bucklee

Red Deer College is located in central Alberta, Canada. One- and two-year programs are offered in a variety of careers and technologies. Other offerings include: apprenticeship training, college preparatory courses, university transfer courses for B.A. and B.S., a nursing degree, and community education courses. As one of the most comprehensive community colleges in Canada, Red Deer College has a diverse population of students and staff. While this diversity is a strength, it presents challenges in addressing a wide variety of student needs.

Guiding Principles/Context

In 1994, Red Deer College reaffirmed that students are at the core of what it does. The new strategic plan discusses the need to establish and monitor indicators of student success with a view to increasing satisfactory academic performance. More specifically, the Division of Student and Educational Resources is committed to fostering the continuous development of students and staff by both supporting their learning and creating an environment in which choices can be made constructively. With a clear institutional and divisional commitment to students, the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) chose to build new partnerships with course instructors, and thus contribute in new ways to the enhancement of student success.

Description of Program

At mid-term, a biology instructor encouraged at-risk students to meet with LAC instructors. Using a problem-solving process, the students addressed the barriers to their success.

In the fall of 1993, an LAC math instructor who teaches a credit calculus preparation course created an optional assignment to address the students' study skills needs. As part of their contracted workload, students could choose to attend a LAC study skills workshop, develop a proposal for implementation, and report on the results of their efforts later in the term.

In December of 1994, another LAC instructor offered a workshop to faculty on how to incorporate learning and/or writing skills development into their course assignments. The math instructor's optional assignment was one of the 32 ideas presented.

As a result of the workshop, several faculty added one or more of these ideas to their courses. However, one workshop participant, a biology instructor, wanted to explore an alternative designed specifically for students at risk of failing his course.

At mid-term, the biology instructor identified all those students in one class who were failing or barely passing. These students (10 out of 24) were offered the option of registering for a one-hour problem-solving session led by a LAC instructor. At the session, groups of two to four students identified the barriers to their success, and reviewed possible strategies to reduce or eliminate these barriers. Students were encouraged to take responsibility for much of the content of these sessions, while the LAC instructor acted primarily as a facilitator.

Students then submitted a plan to the biology instructor outlining ways in which they proposed to improve their marks. Suggested strategies included improving class attendance, avoiding parties the night before exams, exploring financial options in order to quit a part-time job, meeting with the LAC instructor to develop study skills, or whatever met the needs of that student. Near the end of term, the students submitted a report to the course instructor outlining the results of their efforts. The instructor deleted a low quiz mark for students who completed these requirements.

Program Impact

Student response to this offer was extremely positive. All but one took advantage of it. The benefits included:

- Student awareness and use of support services. At the problem-solving sessions, several students said they were glad to learn about the LAC service. Some confessed that although they knew about the LAC, they would not have chosen to attend without the incentive of a mark reduction. Others had attended LAC workshops early in the term and became aware that they needed to do follow-up work to deepen their understanding or improve their skills. Some learned about other College services (e.g., Counselling and Financial Aid) for the first time.

- Short-term classroom behaviour and attitude changes. The course instructor noticed an immediate increase in attendance and a renewed commitment to the course after students attended the problem-solving sessions. Several students reported that they were feeling more confident and in control.

- Improved end-of-term grades. Of the nine students who participated, five improved their grades. Four of these received Bs or Cs. The biology instructor believes that the extent of their improvement was attributable to their involvement in the project. (In one case,

Figure 1
Memo for Encouragement of Student Participation in Class

Re: Improving your Test Performance

I know you'd like to do well in this class. However, I've noticed that your test marks are not as high as they might be. As a result, I've talked with the instructors in the learning Assistance Centre and we've designed a bonus project to help you improve your marks.

IF YOU COMPLETE THE ACTIVITIES OUTLINED BELOW, I WILL DELETE YOUR LOWEST QUIZ MARK.

What do you have to do?

- Go to the Learning Assistance Centre (on the second floor of the Library at the front) and ask to sign up for a "Biology Exam Session." The receptionist will find a time that works for you. At this session, you and a couple of other students will talk about why you've been running into difficulty with tests and then begin to develop a plan for how to improve your marks.

- You must attend the session *this week* by *Friday, February 17*. So it's important to book your session NOW!

- After this session, you will hand in a plan to me outlining the strategies you will use to improve your test results. This might include attendance at LAC workshops, improving class attendance, changing study habits etc. This plan is due by *Monday, February 27*.

- As soon as you've developed the plan, start to work on it. Keep a record of what you do and what the results are. For example, if you've decided to attend class more regularly, keep track of how many classes you attend and whether this seems to help you to understand the material better.

- After you've put the plan into action and discovered the results, hand in a one to two page report outlining how your plan went. Did you follow it or not? Why or why not? Which strategies were the most helpful? What worked and why? What didn't and why not? Did your test results reflect the changes you made to your behaviour? Your report is due on *March 31*.

I hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity to improve your marks. I look forward to hearing about your plans!

chapter test results jumped from an average of 24% before the intervention to an average of 71% afterwards.)

Figure 1 is an example of a memo sent to students in an effort to encourage participation.

For more information, contact Joanne Bucklee, Student and Educational Services, Red Deer College, Alberta, Canada, (403) 342-3123.

The First-Year Experience at Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1990-2001
By Donna Hardy Cox

Memorial University has been engaged in a ten year plan to study The First-Year Experience (FYE). This profile illustrates the framework in which Memorial continues to address the challenges of entering students. In 1990, the Office of Student Affairs and Services embarked on a project to develop a network of services designed to increase the retention and involvement of first-year students. Over the course of the following five years, programs and services were developed to maximize personal, social, and academic support. A strong foundation and focus on the first-year student continues to be an important variable as Memorial University looks toward the next century and its exciting challenges.

Guiding Principles

Memorial is guided by "Launch Forth - A Strategic Plan for Memorial University of Newfoundland," which emphasizes first and foremost the comprehensive theme of "quality in everything we do." Our strategic goal states that "the university will systematically act to enhance quality in all of its services: to students, to the rest of the university community, and to external stakeholders." To complement this direction, "the mission of Student Affairs and Services is dynamic in its determination to facilitate a quality of student life which fosters personal, social, and academic growth and development. As members of the academic team, student affairs and services professionals provide leadership in the identification of, and response to, the changing and continuing needs of students through partnerships within the university and larger community."

The following is a comprehensive list of goals, programs, and services.

Priorities Relative to the First-Year Experience (FYE) 1990 - 1996:

- To participate in maximizing positive and productive adjustment to the FYE
- To assist in the development of an Enrollment Management Strategy for the university
- To create means to maximize student retention and success
- To create measures to determine "value added" components of a quality educational experience
- To create performance indicators to measure and evaluate the FYE
- To create means to be responsive for FYE and changing needs of students.

Summary of Initiatives to Accomplish, 1990-1996 Priorities:

- Recruitment—High School to Acceptance at University
- Academic Advising Centre
- Life Program
- Open Doors Video, brochure, facilitators guide
- Med Quest
- GOAL
- Main Sail
- Entrance Scholarships

Transition: Final Acceptance to University (3 Months Prior to Start of Semester):

- Student Ambassador Program—Send Off Information Sessions

- Non-Traditional Students Handbook
- Hoops and Hurdles—Single Parents Handbook
- New Faculty Orientation
- Send Off
- Parent's Nights
- Parent's Gazette

Orientation: First Two Weeks of Classes:

- First-Year Seminar Series
- Math Skills Inventory
- Institutional Help Symbol
- Ask Me Program
- Collaborative Campus Orientation for Grads and Undergrads
- Peer Orientation Assistants
- Group Leaders
- Safety Awareness Week, Video and Brochure

Retention: First-Year Supports

- Academic Advising : Faculty Advisors, Tack Newsletter
- Peer Orientation Assistants
- Computer Labs & Services
- Writing Centre
- Academic Help Centres
- Blundon Centre
- Native Liaison Office
- Contribution to Campus Life Award
- Host Family Program
- English as Second Language Program
- Peer Helper Program
- Counselling
- Walksafe
- Career & Employment Workshops
- Chaplaincy
- Residence Life Program, Academic Don

Evaluation of Initiatives

Memorial has moved towards a systematic method of evaluating and tracking student progress through the development of its own instruments as well as participation in collective national efforts. This continues under the collaborative auspices of the Higher Education Assessment and Research Unit and the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning at Memorial. Below is a sampling of these efforts:

- Incoming Student Information Form (1989)
- The First-Year Expectation Survey (Est. Fall 1991)
- The First-Year Experience Survey (Est. Winter 1992)
- First-Year Seminar Series Participant Evaluation (Est. Fall 1994)
- Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire
- First-Year Student Focus group (Est. Winter 1995)
- Quality of Life Forums
- Graduating Student Survey
- 12 Institutional study
- CIAP—tracking institutional data
- Research Report—Focus on the Student (Est. Winter 1995)

Future Challenges: 1995 -2001

Action on Memorial University's projected 20% enrollment decrease in full-time undergraduate students over the next five years will be influenced by a focus on a combination of student learning and development models, enrollment management strategies, and indicators of performance to demonstrate value-added educational experiences. The First-Year Experience is critical not only to students, but also to institutions of higher learning as the later strive to meet the expectations of all stakeholders. As we look to the next five years, one of Memorial's priorities will be to identify means to mitigate the enrollment decline by increasing enrollment from traditional sources, exploring new sources, and retaining existing students. Institutional specific challenges include:

- Maximizing learning and student development opportunities of students
- Continuing to strive to develop indicators of performance which can maximize student development and academic performance
- Efforts to develop a Canadian graduate program in student affairs and services to train professionals and encourage research in this field.

For more information, contact Donna Hardy Cox, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NF, (709) 737-7594.

Office of First-Year Studies at the University of Guelph
By Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch, Nancy Bailey, Katherine Elliott, and Mildred Eisenbach

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Background

Located in a city 100 kilometers from Toronto, Guelph is a research-oriented, comprehensive university with close to 12,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students who are admitted on a program specific basis. Students are enrolled in eleven undergraduate programs located in seven colleges that offer 112 different majors and specializations. There is no common first-year curriculum. Approximately 2,500 new undergraduates enter the University of Guelph each year.

In comparison to other Ontario universities, Guelph has an unusually homogeneous and youthful student group who enter directly from high school with high admission averages. Most students (90%) come from outside the local community, over 80% live on campus, and approximately 70% are women. In general, these students have high expectations of themselves and the University. For example, 69% rate their academic ability and their drive to achieve as high, and campus services are sought out by increasing numbers of first-year students. Retention is high (over 90% of first-year students return), although many students experience a significant grade drop in their first semester as they make the adjustment to the learning demands of university.

A key discussion paper, "The First-Year Experience: Responding to the Challenge," (Winter, 1993) was extensively circulated and discussed with various Senate and administrative committees. This document acknowledged the need to consolidate a number of existing programs under one roof. As a consequence of the acceptance of this report by Senate, the responsibility for the management of basic university-wide programs and services for entering students was transferred from a variety of units and consolidated in a more coherent, unified structure - the Office of First-Year Studies (OFYS).

The Office of First-Year Studies

The Office of First-Year Studies was created by Senate mandate at the University of Guelph in the Spring of 1994. Its purpose is to focus appropriate effort, attention, and resources on the needs of entering students as they make the transition to a higher learning environment.

A unique feature of the OFYS is its integration of academic programs and student services. Through its two co-directors (one a faculty member, the other a student affairs professional), the OFYS reports jointly to the Associate Vice-Presidents Academic and Student Affairs, both of whom are located in the Office of the Provost and

Vice-President Academic. In addition, the activities carried out by the OFYS are overseen by a subcommittee of the Board of Undergraduate Studies, the body responsible for the undergraduate curriculum which reports to Senate.

The staff working directly for the OFYS is small. In addition to the co-directors, they include two student affairs professionals, an academic counsellor, and a secretary. Another 15 faculty members are seconded each year to teach courses offered through the OFYS. In addition, about 50 senior undergraduate and graduate students are hired in a variety of roles: as peer helpers, student program managers, and teaching assistants.

The reality of fiscal cutbacks and frozen budgets meant that no new funding was allocated to the OFYS when it was first established. Its creation depended entirely on the transfer of current base funding and existing financial support. A grant from the Alma Mater Fund enabled renovations to be carried out in one of the centrally located, historical buildings on campus, where the OFYS is now housed.

A number of principles have emerged that now serve as guidelines for both policy and practice. These are summarized below:

Transition Continuum. Rather than viewing transition to university as a single event that occurs when a student first arrives on campus, it is more useful to view the transition along a continuum that begins before admission and continues through the student's first year. The major intervention points along the continuum are pre-admission, pre-entry, entry, and continuing programs. At each point, particular student needs predominate, calling for a corresponding programmatic intervention.

Diversity. Despite strong demographic homogeneity among entering students, it is important that each be viewed as an individual with her or his own needs, abilities, cultural background, and stage of development.

Active Learning. The goal in all intentional efforts is to assist the development of academically committed and intellectually curious students who are well-prepared for continuing undergraduate learning.

Collaboration. No single part of the University can, by itself, serve the needs of all entering students. Collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and alumni is essential to create new programs and maintain existing ones.

Students Helping Students. The use of continuing students as peer helpers, program managers, and student volunteers is an effective and efficient way to ensure that service delivery remains close to the reality of those whom it seeks to assist. Moreover, continuing students who serve in these roles gain useful experience and skills as they make the transition out of university into graduate school or employment.

Evaluation. Constant monitoring and evaluation keep programs vital and flexible, thus able to respond to changing circumstances and to the need for accountability.

Resourcefulness. In times of financial constraint it is absolutely essential that programs and services be designed so that they consume as few resources as possible.

While relatively easy to state, these principles are not so easy to implement. The specific programs, services, and products that put them into practice are described below.

Transition Workbooks

For many university-bound students the transition from high school to university is a perplexing time exacerbated by limited first-hand experience and knowledge about the demands of university life. To help prospective students anticipate and prepare for this important transition, the University of Guelph has created a set of workbooks that address the needs of students (and their families) early along the transition continuum. Sold on a cost-recoverable basis, workbooks are purchased through a mail-order service provided by the university bookstore.

The workbooks take the form of seven, stand-alone booklets, each focusing on an aspect of

the transition process. Topics include: academic change, active involvement, relationships, financial planning, wellness, planning for the future, and a workbook for parents. A teacher's guide also is available to assist secondary school teachers in their use of the material.

Following an extensive literature review, one primary writer collaborated with a panel of university educators, first-year university students, and senior high-school students to create the workbooks, determining the topics to be included and the language and graphics appropriate for use with a senior high school audience. Each booklet includes generic information designed to introduce readers to the topic and engage their active involvement. Included are interactive questions, role plays, suggestions, and checklists that encourage readers to apply generic situations and experiences to themselves both in present and future contexts. While situations and experiences are described with a broad brush, a specific enough picture is painted to allow students to imagine themselves in the situation, no matter which university they eventually choose to attend.

There are a number of different ways in which the materials have been used. Since they are interactive, these materials can be completed by individuals working alone, in an independent study format. Sections of the material can also be highlighted by a presenter—a teacher, guidance counsellor, visiting university student, or liaison officer. Otherwise, the material can be introduced in a workshop setting, with small groups of prospective students or parents working through the questions, gaining information from others in the group. The workbooks have also been used as a follow-up handout to a lecture on transition issues in order to reinforce specific concerns highlighted in a formal talk.

Prior to their introduction, the workbooks were pilot tested by the University of Guelph's secondary school liaison staff, who used the materials in workshops they conducted with senior high school students. In addition, the final draft of the materials was assessed by groups of high school students who used them in several different formats: classroom setting with a teacher, independent study, individual counselling session, and workshop with a liaison officer. In each of these learning contexts students consistently gave the materials excellent ratings in terms of relevance, organization, format, tone and language, graphics, and length.

Currently in use for four years, between 500 and 1000 workbook sets are sold annually. Consideration is being given to introducing several new modules that focus on the needs of specific groups of students, for example, students with disabilities, returning adult students, off-campus students, and part-time learners.

The START Program

Since 1979, the University of Guelph has offered START during the summer preceding students' entry. All participants are individuals who have accepted the University's offer of admission but have not yet actually registered. This program, therefore, is located at the pre-entry point on the transition continuum. The needs experienced by students at this stage relate to their eminent immersion in the university environment.

Offered four times each summer, in both one-day and a two-day formats, START provides a variety of experiences designed to give students first-hand exposure to the University, including the opportunity to meet other new students, as well as senior students, faculty and staff, to develop confidence in their ability to be successful university students, and to develop skills and strategies that facilitate success.

The 550 students (approximately) who participate in START each year are organized into groups of 15-20 individuals, each led by a senior student. Membership in these small groups facilitates personal introductions and helps establish a community-oriented identity. Central to the success of the program is the role played by the group leaders who not only encourage interaction, but also relate their own personal experiences as students and model student success. The major activities imbedded in the program include:

- Learning lectures—mini-lectures delivered by faculty in various disciplines and debriefed by study skills staff. The learning lectures give students an accurate sense of what it will be like to be in a large lecture theatre, how to take effective lecture notes, how to approach a professor, and expected standards of classroom etiquette.

- Course selection—group sessions with academic counsellors allow discussion of course choices, scheduling and managing course-loads, and program regulations and opportunities.

- Lifestyle issues and community resources—a combination of workshops, drama troupe presentations, panel discussions, information displays, and recreational activities that focus on balancing academic and social life, developing student leadership, and accessing campus resources (library, computer facilities, student services).

- Residence life—students attending the two-day program live in a university residence. Each small group is housed in its own lounge or house and each student is assigned a roommate, thereby simulating the actual residence environment.

In addition to the program offered to students, one-day parent programs are scheduled concurrently. Organized in conjunction with the University's alumni office, this program provides parents with first-hand information about the educational experience at the University of Guelph.

While the START program is overseen by a professional staff member, daily management and operations are the responsibility of two student managers, with the junior manager becoming next year's senior. This arrangement offers students, some of whom are in co-operative education programs, a remarkable opportunity to manage a large operation.

Reports from START attendees indicate that on their return to university in September, they feel more positive about learning and studying, are more comfortable at the university, and they have a pre-established group of friends whom they meet again at START reunions held during orientation. An independent study conducted with Fall 1986 entrants supports the students' own perceptions. It concluded that, "In the first year of coping with a new situation and adjusting to university level academic standards and expectations, START students enjoy the experience and obtain more positive educational outcomes, including persistence in their programs, better academic performance, and personal development and growth" (Gilbert & Auger, 1989).

Orientation

The orientation program at the University of Guelph shares many of the same objectives as those addressed at other Canadian universities—to welcome new students to campus in a friendly and personable way and to introduce students to university resources and facilities. A number of important features of the program at Guelph are worth highlighting.

First, in addition to providing a physical and social orientation to the campus, an academic component is central to the program. On the day of new student registration a welcome assembly is held, in which new students are formally received as new members of the university community. Gowned faculty and senior academic administrators parade across the campus and address students in the same hall in which convocation is held. Speakers, who typically include the president and vice-presidents, student government leaders, and the city mayor, introduce students to the traditions, values, and expectations of their new learning community.

This is followed the next day by a series of college/faculty meetings hosted by the deans in which students are welcomed to their particular program. On the same day, the student governments connected to each college organize barbecues and other social and recreational activities designed to create connections among students in the same degree program. The next two days of orientation are

reserved for what are termed First Class Meetings. During the Thursday and Friday of orientation week a one hour meeting is scheduled for each course. At these meetings faculty do not deliver course content, but instead are asked to use the time to introduce themselves by, for example, discussing how they became interested in their discipline, describing their research interests, and explaining how these interests would be reflected in the course. Faculty also use this time to conduct course-related business, review course outlines and instructions, and to address student expectations.

A second feature of the orientation program is that it is a joint effort organized by various student groups, academic and student service departments, and university support services. A task group, including representatives from each of these constituencies, sets program guidelines, oversees planning, and helps resolve conflicts and difficulties as they arise. The task group is chaired by student managers hired by the Office of First-Year Studies. Moreover, the process of designing the program involves close collaboration with elected student governments. This approach to managing orientation ensures that the program is sufficiently comprehensive to address the broad range of social and academic needs experienced by students as they enter the university, while simultaneously ensuring good risk management practices.

A third important aspect of the program, following from the second, is orientation's heavy reliance on in-course students, who serve as Orientation Volunteers (OVs). Each year approximately 400 continuing students are recruited to staff various activities. The OVs aid in moving new students into residences, help off-campus students get linked up with one another, organize information booths and displays, act as security staff at concerts and dances, conduct tours of the campus and city, and organize Shinerama fund-raising events. Volunteers are provided with an orientation T-shirt, which identifies them as individuals whom new students can approach if they need direction or answers to questions. Students applying to become OVs are required to attend a two-day training program that focuses on team building, transition issues, program familiarity and procedures, roles and expectations, and safety and security arrangements. It is without question that the OVs are key to the successful implementation of the program.

In essence, the orientation program is a major community building activity in which new students are able to identify and become part of primary reference groups relevant to their university experience. Because so many of our students live on campus, their initial connections are residence based—meeting others first in their lounge or house and then their building. In addition, early creation of linkages with students sharing similar academic programs is structured into the program.

Evaluation feedback collected from new students indicates that the program provides an effective and helpful orientation to the campus. Typically, over 80% of respondents to a widely circulated questionnaire rate the program positively, highlighting in particular the opportunity to meet new people and the friendly and helpful way in which orientation volunteers and residence life staff welcomed and introduced them to campus. Moreover, in 1995 the orientation brochure and T-shirts were selected as first-place winners by Region VII of the National Orientation Directors Association.

University College Connection

Selected in 1994 as the "Program of the Year" by the Student Affairs Division of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, the University College Connection (UCC) helps build active learning communities by clustering together students with shared academic interests. The program begins as students enter the university and continues through their first year. Expanding at a rapid rate, UCC now involves about 500 students. A number of objectives drive the program:

- To provide students with a manageable primary reference group that links social, personal and academic life

- To promote intentional collaborative learning endeavors
- To promote formal and informal interaction between faculty and students
- To empower students as learners by helping them develop effective learning strategies for university-level courses
- To encourage students' participation in all aspects of university life
- To provide peer helpers and students with opportunities to develop leadership and organizational skills.

Both on- and off-campus clusters are available, but the design of each differs somewhat. Residence students who choose to participate in UCC live in a cluster of between 15 and 30 first-year students who are enrolled in the same academic program and share at least three courses in common. A senior student peer helper, also in the same degree program, lives with the cluster and is responsible for organizing a range of social and academic activities. Academic programming emphasizes effective study strategies, negotiating the academic system, organizing faculty visits, and lab and studio tours. The peer helpers also encourage the formation of study groups for the courses that students have in common.

Off-campus students in designated programs (B.A., B.Sc., and B.A.Sc.) are automatically identified as cluster participants. As is the case with students in clusters on the campus, those located off campus are organized by academic program. While it is not possible to guarantee that all off-campus participants share at least three courses in common, the peer helpers attempt to organize sub-groups based on common courses. Also, the clusters of students off campus are a little larger, each having between 25 and 35 participants.

The success of UCC relies heavily on the peer helpers who lead each cluster. These senior students are selected for the role because they are themselves students who are academically motivated and successful, actively involved in campus activities and clubs, have an understanding of the nature of university-level learning, and display good interpersonal skills. They participate in an extensive training program and meet regularly for individual and group supervision.

A professional staff member within OFYS manages the program, and with the assistance of a part-time student manager, hires, trains, and supervises student staff, oversees programming within clusters, maintains contact with program counsellors and faculty, and works with student housing services to identify cluster locations and student placement within clusters in an effort to create and maintain partnerships between peer helpers and residence assistants.

Independent evaluations of the program consistently show positive results. The mutual support aspects of the clusters seem to be particularly effective, as are shared classes and the availability of study groups. Cluster participants also attribute a good deal of personal and social development to the cluster experience and emphasize the important role played by student staff. Among other contributions, student staff appear to foster independence and appreciation of differences, provide academic information and promote academic work, and enhance social participation and community building. Evidence also indicates that grade performance among cluster participants is stronger than that of non-cluster students.

Akademia

Akademia was initially offered in 1990 as a self-contained first-year academic program to provide students with an alternate and enhanced entering year, after which they proceed to the second year of the regular B.A. or B.Sc. degree. The goals of the Akademia program can be summarized as follows:

- To provide students the opportunity to explore multi-disciplinary connections, and to foster intellectual curiosity
- To emphasize the importance of the liberal approach to education as a sound basis for lifelong learning

- To broaden the horizons of first-year students so that the eventual choice of specialization in the baccalaureate programs will be most appropriately made

- To foster, in a living/learning environment, a spirit of collaboration and mutual support, and the opportunity for the development of leadership and organizing abilities, especially in the area of co-curricular activities.

Through specially designed integrated courses, Akademia seeks to bridge the humanities, social science, and science gap and to contribute to a learning environment in which independence and love of learning are enhanced. The provision of a specially selected residence and two peer helpers aids student transition and development both academically and personally. Admission requirements include high school courses in both major fields of study and marks equivalent to those in the regular B.A. and B.Sc. programs. Enrollment ranges between 70 and 100 students per year.

In 1986, the University of Guelph defined a number of guiding principles for its academic programs. Known as the Learning Objectives, they include literacy, numeracy, depth of understanding, sense of historical development, global understanding, independence of thought, aesthetic and moral maturity, and love of learning. The challenge was to redress the balance away from the natural tendency in a research intensive university to concentrate on disciplinary knowledge and professional competence. In response, Akademia encourages first-year students to develop an approach to learning that includes all aspects of the learning objectives—an approach that looks at current issues in the small-sized integrated courses from many different angles, not simply from the singular perspective of the musician, economist, or geneticist. In addition to integrated courses, Akademia students are also required to take at least one regular course in science and one in arts (or social science) in addition to regular core requirements. In combination with the living experience and co-curricular activities, Akademia students are exposed to a stimulating integrative learning environment that also contributes to their ability to make an informed choice of specialization at the end of the year.

Initially, Akademia was run by a decanal director and a program council, and was supported by a part-time program counsellor. These responsibilities were transferred to OFYS in 1994, and a professional staff member now co-ordinates the program and supervises the senior student peers, while a part-time program counsellor continues to be available and student housing services provides space for an Akademia office. Approximately five integrated courses are offered each year, with faculty and teaching assistants seconded from various departments. New integrated courses are encouraged by inviting faculty to submit course proposals.

Despite strong faculty support for the Akademia objectives and interest in teaching experimental courses, mounting the program is becoming increasingly difficult. With faculty resources at an all-time low, departments cannot spare their experienced faculty and, as a result, the team-teaching model is difficult to sustain. In addition, some of the integrated courses are viewed as having insufficient science content to be accepted as science credits. An associated difficulty arises from the current student perception that any delay in pursuing their career objective means a further and unfeasible financial burden.

Introduction to Higher Learning

Introduction to Higher Learning is a credit course available to new students during their first semester of undergraduate study. The course is an adaptation of the freshman seminar (University 101) offered at the University of South Carolina as well as at numerous other American universities and the University of Prince Edward Island. During each of the first five years it has been offered, approximately 50 to 80 students enrolled in the course on an elective basis. As of Fall 1995, however, enrollment increased to over 280 students, when the course became a requirement in the B.Sc. (Agriculture) program.

The purpose of Introduction to Higher Learning is to provide new students with a formal opportunity to explore the concept, thought and setting of the University of Guelph within the framework of their own life and experience. The course covers four main substantive areas:

- The historic and current role of universities in society
- The intellectual and emotional transitions involved in personal growth and the development of scholarship in the university environment
- An exploration of learning styles and the way in which knowledge is acquired and disseminated in different academic disciplines
- Ethical considerations in the acquisition and application of knowledge.

Oral and written communication skills are emphasized through frequent writing assignments and seminar participation. Also imbedded in the course are opportunities and instruction that foster the development of a range of personal management skills, including: library research, electronic communications, study skills, time management, career planning, and race and diversity issues.

While the course is team taught, its largely coordinated by one faculty member who also serves as principal instructor. He invites other faculty, student services staff, librarians, computing staff, and others to provide instruction and/or design experiences that foster the acquisition of competencies required for self-reliant learning. The instructional format combines two hours of lecture per week coupled with two hours of small group seminar weekly. The seminar sections are led by graduate teaching assistants recruited from a range of disciplines.

In a recent qualitative examination of the course conducted by a graduate student, Introduction to Higher Learning was described as enhancing successful transition to university. Through focus group interviews involving students enrolled in the course between 1991 and 1993, the study found that students exhibited the following outcomes:

- Increased their knowledge of the campus
- Increased their use of academic services
- Greater comfort interacting with faculty
- Greater involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Improved academic skills.

Conclusions

Through its program offerings and other consultative and committee involvements the Office of First-Year Studies provides the university with a number of advantages, including:

- Integration of services that leads to efficiency and consistency, and makes student participation more likely
- Re-enforcement of the core academic programs in establishing a foundation for subsequent senior years by increasing student motivation, retention and grade performance
- Provision of a horizontal foundation which links the vertical structures of departments, specializations, programs and colleges
- Facilitation of linkages between entering students and the faculty and staff who are most conscious of their needs and concerned for their success
- Provision of a neutral ground for analysis leading to curriculum review and change, for addressing problems arising in courses or curricula, and for alerting the program committees and various student affairs departments to new areas of student need
- Development of responses to the needs of a diverse student body in ways that do not call attention to the differences between students that might tend to isolate or stigmatize.

Despite these advantages to the university, OFYS, during its first year of operation, has encountered inevitable problems and obstacles. Aside from those associated with resource constraints, OFYS has confronted issues stemming from both its need to establish a presence and its position of advocacy for the entering year. These are

illustrated by jurisdictional overlaps, the need to establish credibility as resources for faculty and staff, and limited front-line presence in the lives of first-year students in addition to those served directly by OFYS programs.

In spite of these obstacles, some recent indications suggest that OFYS established a credible presence in just one year's time. It has been able to bring departments together to find a solution to a difficult course/curriculum problem. OFYS has been highly successful in fostering faculty, staff, and student debate and input into the university's strategic plan. Its contribution to recommendations for the establishment of a first-year course similar to Introduction to Higher Learning, but with special emphasis on the modes of inquiry basic to university disciplinary research, has been particularly helpful. In addition, a strategic planning proposal to alter the delivery of academic advising, which will better meet the needs of undecided students who are considering changes in their majors, will create a major opportunity for OFYS. Along with the various deans' offices and program committees, OFYS will help shape an improved academic advising system for first-year undergraduates.

OFYS is slowly being integrated into the regular decision-making structures of the university. While the present fiscal climate means that resources allocated to OFYS continue to be severely constrained, the new department is becoming part of the university core. The most pressing concern is maintaining momentum and introducing new initiatives without attempting more than can be reasonably accomplished.

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The University 100 Seminar at the University of Regina
By Judy Chapman

The University of Regina's University 100 seminar (UEPS-001) is designed to support the successful integration of the newly admitted student and, in particular, students admitted under the open admission policy. Seminar students are taught to learn effectively, resolve complex transitional issues, and balance the demands and opportunities of a university education. The seminar combines academic skills and extended orientation content.

The course proposal was approved for the 1991 fall semester as a non-credit, compulsory seminar for open admission students. While it is open to all first-year students, the majority of registrants are open admission or "Entrance Program" (EP) students. EP provides access to the first-year course for up to 80% of the normal workload. Over 1,000 students have completed the seminar.

The Purpose

The goals of the seminar are to enhance scholarship and to retain the students who will benefit from the opportunity to attain a university education. Successful completion of the seminar does not imply or guarantee the avoidance of academic failure. Course objectives include:

- To further personal development in the context of the goals of higher education
- To reinforce academic skills
- To identify and develop skills that will enable independent functioning in a university environment
- To develop an awareness and appreciation for the resources provided by the university community.

Delivery Characteristics

The seminar meets for one and a half hours per week for the length of the first semester (usually 13 weeks). Course sections are restricted to 20 students. The number of sections is determined by the demand for spaces. The course does not provide credit towards degree completion, and students are graded pass/fail. The grade indicates completion of assignments, 100% attendance, and course participation. If failed, the seminar cannot be

repeated. The required textbooks include the university's general calendar and a variety of student development textbooks and sources.

Seminar leaders receive training in student development and faculty mentorship support from the teaching development centre throughout the semester. Leaders are selected from graduate students who seek to improve their teaching and learning skills.

Student Outcomes

From 1991 to 1994, 501 students were surveyed at the end of their first semester and 241, or 48.1%, responded. Survey questions focused on their experience, academic behaviour, expected outcomes, and evaluation of the value of the seminar. Responses were cross tabulated, and the overall mean weighted percentage average and registration pattern.

Seminar students range from 18 to 70 years of age and represent Canadians from multilingual, immigrant, and aboriginal backgrounds. The majority of the students are registered in full-time studies, older (mean age of 29), commute to the campus, and are the first in their family to register in a university.

The majority of respondents report that the seminar meets the goals of easing their transition to higher education. Other findings include the following:

- Students who pass the seminar achieve a mean first semester weighted percentage average 13.1% higher than students who fail.
- Students who report studying for 40 or more hours per week achieve a higher weighted percentage average than students who study less.
- The professors and staff of the University encourage the student to feel positive about a university education while course and degree program demands often discourage students.
- Most students did not know what to expect in their first semester.
- The students, on average, expect their grades to be 11.2% higher than the actual average achieved.
- Students who attribute their grades to hard work achieve a higher average than students who attribute their performance to motivation, ability, and luck.
- 17.8% of the respondents considered dropping out during the semester.
- 82.0% of the successful seminar students registered in the following semester.
- 75.5% recommend the seminar to all first semester students.

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Evaluation and Change at York University
By J. Paul Grayson

York University, located on the northern fringe of Metropolitan Toronto, has approximately 40,000 students. Many are the sons and daughters of immigrants; almost half come from families where the annual family income is below the provincial average. Among first-year undergraduates only 10% live in residence on campus. The vast majority of the remainder live at home with their parents and spend a considerable amount of time commuting to and from the university. Under circumstances such as these, integrating first-year students into the university community is a particularly difficult task.

In terms of the formal curriculum, York University currently attempts to meet the special needs of first-year students in two ways. First, the university offers college based courses, with an average enrollment of 18, that focus on a variety of topics. The specific objectives of such courses are to help integrate students into the university and to assist them in dealing with skill deficiencies in areas like critical thinking, time management, effective writing, and so on. Overall, approximately 31% of first-year students are enrolled in a college course.

Second, the departments of history, English, and humanities, in some of their first-year courses, attempt to deal with students' skill deficiencies in various areas; however, student integration into the university is not a course priority. While the average section size in first-year English is 27, the comparable figures for history and humanities are 68 and 110 respectively. In many instances, large classes require the employment of teaching assistants. Approximately 5%, 10%, and 26% of first-year students take courses in history, English, and the humanities respectively. On the basis of course enrollments in college courses or in courses in history, English or the humanities, we can estimate that if each entering student took only one of these courses, spaces would be available for 72% of first-year students in courses that, to varying degrees, attempt to deal with the special needs of first-year students.

Because of a desire to ensure that York University meets the needs of incoming students, the Vice-President Academic established a "Task Force on Faculties, Colleges, and The First-Year Experience in 1995." The objective of the task force was to determine "how best to deploy all available resources of colleges and faculties in order to enhance The First-Year Experience of York University students." As well as engaging in the usual consultations with faculty as part of its inquiry, the task force used responses to a survey of approximately 1,800 first-year students, as well as administrative records, to gain insight into the experiences of students participating in college courses in general, and first-year English, history, and humanities courses in particular.

This report will have two foci:

- A presentation of survey and administrative record data made available to the task force to assist in the evaluation of college, English, history, and humanities courses in terms of skills development and student integration.
- Preliminary ideas of the task force regarding change to The First-Year Experience at York University that would address some of the concerns raised by the survey, administrative records, and consultations with faculty.

Survey Results

Through the survey it was possible to compare students enrolled in college or discipline courses described above to other first-year students in terms of a number of experiences and outcomes, including the following:

- Increases in knowledge and critical skills
- Relationships with faculty, teaching assistants, and other students
- The adequacy of advising.

Overall, survey data suggest the following:

- As in other universities, many students face considerable difficulty in making the transition to York University. Moreover, in many instances they do not know where to turn for help.
- Enrollment in the college and discipline courses identified earlier does not result in increased skill development or (with the exception of students in English courses) in the development of bonds with faculty.
- Commuter students enrolled in college courses may be slightly more involved in out-of-class academic activities than other students.
- A majority of students favour the offering of a compulsory first-year course that would assist them in making the transition to university.

Record Information

While survey data facilitated the identification of self-assessed skills acquisition and the extent to which first-year students interacted with faculty, teaching assistants, and advisors, information in administrative records made it possible to assess the impact of enrollment in particular types of first-year courses on academic achievement. If enrollment in college, history, English, and humanities courses results in greater integration and/or the development of important skills, it is reasonable to assume, in the context

of high school marks (Ontario Academic Credit (OAC) marks), age, and number of completed credits held constant, that students taking the designated courses would have higher GPAs than those who did not take them.

A file was generated from administrative records that provided information on all students admitted to the faculties of arts, fine arts, pure and applied science, environmental studies, and administrative studies for the 1994-95 year (5,598 in total). Variables in the file included whether or not students took college, history, English, and humanities courses; OAC marks; age; and number of completed credits. Covariate analysis permitted examining the impact of taking a college course on overall GPA controlling for OAC marks, age, completed credits, and taking English, history, and humanities courses. Similarly, the impacts of taking English, history, and humanities courses were examined with all of the other variables held constant.

From the analysis it was clear that, all else being equal, taking a college course had the greatest impact on first year GPA. The adjusted average GPA for students taking such courses was 5.38. The comparable figures for students enrolled in English, history, and humanities courses were 5.31, 5.32, and 5.18 respectively.

Table 2 summarizes the differences in marks between students taking designated courses and other first-year students, making several things apparent:

- In general, differences in marks between students taking and those not taking designated courses are small (excluding Administrative Studies, an anomaly, a high of 6 and a low of -4).
- In some faculties taking one of the designated courses results in higher than average marks (e.g., Administrative Studies); however, in other faculties, course enrollment resulted in lower than average marks (e.g., Fine Arts).
- The only courses that have a consistently positive effect on first-year marks are college courses.

While the impact on first year GPA of taking a college course is generally positive, it is small. The effects of English, history, and humanities courses are varied. Collectively, the results suggest that to a limited degree, college courses may be meeting their objective of assisting in the academic preparation of first-year students. While English courses may have a similar positive result for students in arts and environmental studies, their effect on fine arts students may be negative. History courses, likewise, may be of slight benefit to arts students but not to those in environmental studies or fine arts. Humanities courses may only be of benefit to students in science.

Qualifications

These conclusions must be qualified. The data do not indicate how much marking practices in each of the designated courses contribute to the effects analyzed above. For example, the overall GPAs of science students are lower than those of students in other faculties. Is the positive impact on science students' grades from taking a humanities course

Table 2
Gain in GPA Attributal to Taking Specific Designated Courses Adjusting for Effects of Other Designated Courses, OAC Marks, Age, and Number of Completed Credits.

	College	English	History	Humanities
Administrative Studies	13%			
Arts	5%	4%	3%	0%
Environmental Studies	3%	4%	0%	-4%
Fine Arts	0%	-3%	-3%	-3%
Science				6%

a result of their learning important skills in the course, or is it a reflection of the possibility that marks in humanities are higher than those in science? We do not know. Because of confounding influences such as these, and in view of the relatively small differences in GPA between those students who take and those do not take the designated courses, perhaps the safest conclusion is that college courses, along with first year English, history and humanities courses, may not to any reasonable extent impart skills that result in greater academic achievement.

Implications

It must be stressed that these findings do not mean that all students fail to benefit from participation in the designated courses. Nor do they imply that first-year students at York University do not become integrated into the university or develop skills important to student success. What they do indicate is that participation in the courses under discussion may not contribute in a systematic fashion to these objectives. The findings also indicate that, if in fact the specific needs of first-year students are not being met, changes in the first-year program are needed.

While at the time of writing the task force had not completed its final report, the task force has considered a number of measures designed to improve The First-Year Experience at York University. As an important first step, it considered that the objective of the first year of study should be to "position students to succeed at their subsequent university level studies and to help students integrate into university life." It was also accepted that policies designed to achieve this overall objective should be based on five principles:

- Shifting from teacher-centred to student-centred learning
- Empowerment of students and faculty
- Simplification and clarification of program degree requirements
- Involvement of the best teachers in first year
- Close collaboration of academic and non-academic areas in realizing goals.

A Concrete Example

Consistent with the foregoing, a proposal was discussed that would embody the foregoing objective and principles in a re-structured curriculum that, in the first year, would focus on the development of skills essential to university success (e.g., critical, communication, and computing skills), specific disciplinary competencies, and the effective integration of students into the university. The primary vehicle for the realization of these goals would be the equivalent of four mandatory courses, to be taken in a specified sequence, open only to specific cohorts of first-year students. The format of such courses would be one in which in each course (consisting of two hours of general instruction per week) would be balanced by two additional hours of work in small tutorial groups.

Importantly, both advising and extra-curricular activities would be linked to individual courses. In addition, required courses would be presented in such a way as to build on skills and knowledge gained in previous required courses. It is expected that the combination of courses that focus on generic skills as well as specific disciplinary subject matters, instruction in small tutorials, and the linking of curricular and extra-curricular activities would provide students with the skills essential to student success and integration into the university beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

At York University, an evaluation of The First-Year Experience has involved the consideration of extensive research results as well as traditional forms of university consultation. From both the research and consultations with faculty it was possible to identify ways in which The First-Year Experience might be improved so that students would be both better prepared for university life and more closely integrated into the university than formerly has been the case. Radical changes in advising, curriculum, and the linking of extra-curricular activities and classroom activities are viewed as possible means of easing the transition to university, subsequently promoting student success.

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Chapter Seven

Summary Findings, Observations, and Policy Recommendations

This chapter relates the student experience themes identified in Chapters Two and Four to the programs, courses, and delivery characteristics described in Chapters Three and Five and to the institutional cultures outlined in the case studies in Chapter Six. The linking of The First-Year Experience, from the student point of view, with educational structures, processes, outcomes and institutional cultures represents, for many policy analysts and researchers, a useful performance measure for Canadian postsecondary education. Emphasis on the assessment and evaluation of what works and what doesn't work in terms of the progression, success, learning, and development of first-year students has become an especially powerful force for change and improvement in higher education.

Part A of The First-Year Experience survey asked if institutions collected background information on first-year students outside of what is collected on application forms (e.g., background/entry characteristics, parental education, resident/commuter status, language spoken at home, numeracy, literacy, skills, attitudes, and values at entry, finances, vocational/educational program certainty, confidence, self-concept, etc.). Approximately half of the colleges and universities indicated that additional information was collected. Since we know that unique sub-groups differentially experience, react to, and benefit from first-year programs and services, it is unfortunate that more institutions do not seek information on the basic background characteristics of their students, particularly those relating to student success.

On the other hand, some institutions collect considerable information. For example, at Trent University all students are asked to complete an application form that includes basic demographic data, information on their program, subject, year of study, high school or postsecondary attendance, awards, special interests, activities, and, if appropriate, general residence preferences. Information from this form is used in assigning academic advisors and college residences. The student interest information is provided to Student Introductory Seminar Week Leaders so that they can send personalized letters welcoming all students. Individual colleges at Trent University also distribute detailed residence questionnaires to allocate rooms and room-mates. To quote from a covering letter to the questionnaire "... if you are really a 'clothes on the floor' sort of person say so; you may not want to end up living with a neat freak." Questions range from the time of day the student gets up to music preferences and what students do to make themselves feel better when they are sad. The University of Calgary, along with six other institutions (King's College (Western), Toronto, Ryerson, Guelph, Brock, Ottawa) use a common incoming student survey adapted from Alexander Astin's CIRP instrument. Basic information is obtained on a wide range of variables, including:

- Demographic

- Socio-economic background
- Financial status
- Previous educational experience and grades
- General activities over the past year
- Reasons for enrolling
- Educational intentions
- Abilities
- Fundamental values and attitudes.

Slightly more universities (53%) but fewer colleges (41%) measure student experiences in the first year. Mount Allison conducted a 1993 first-year student expectation survey with a January 1994 follow-up on first semester experiences, as well as a satisfaction survey for international students, a residence satisfaction survey, and a student evaluation of personal time management. Queen's University also conducted a residence evaluation survey (1994/95). Wilfrid Laurier University conducts orientation, student services, quality of student life surveys, and residence and teaching evaluations. All students in residence (about 40% of all first-year students) at the University of Western Ontario completed a residence evaluation survey and in 1994, 200 first-year students ($N = 800$) completed the College Student Experience Questionnaire, and 385 completed the Undergraduate Experience Survey co-ordinated by the University of Manitoba.

Even fewer universities (40%) and colleges (10%) measure educational outcomes of The First-Year Experience. Most of the outcome measures specified relate to conventional grade, withdrawal or retention rate, course testing, teaching evaluation, or student satisfaction surveys. The traditional emphasis on input characteristics is due partly to institutional concern about marketing or recruitment at entry, while less responsibility is assumed for student outcomes. Student grades and graduation are often felt to be solely determined by individual characteristics, efforts, and abilities.

Canadian postsecondary institutions indicate considerable interest in a clearinghouse that would catalogue and disseminate first-year research. One hundred percent responded yes to this question. Similarly, when asked if there was any interest in an organized service that would assist in the development, design, and evaluation of programs, 80% responded positively. Often the negative responses indicated limited funds to pay for this type of service and one respondent noted "Non, l'evaluation systematique de nos services fait partie d'une politique en vigueur . . .".

What emerges about the entering characteristics of students and The First-Year Experience is the following:

- Unlike past patterns of a largely homogenized population, students now come from very diverse backgrounds and have very different profiles, interests, expectations, and academic performance levels. It is not useful to talk about the typical or average college/university student. Instead, typologies based on age, source of entry, and other background characteristics appear helpful to distinguish initial and later educational experience.

- Even for university students, reasons for attending appear to be highly pragmatic. Most students are concerned with building toward specific careers, and are most involved in the programs and institutional reputations leading to those. Many students, however, are uncertain about their ultimate occupational and educational goals and about the nature of college/university life.

- What students expect to happen in their first year of postsecondary education is not based on the realities of what does happen, which demonstrates the need for not only more realistic information and communication but also more intentional transition mechanisms. Colleges and universities traditionally have not had a customer, client, or service philosophy.

- Apart from attending classes, the tendency is for first-year students to be only loosely connected with their colleges and universities.

The first four to six weeks are critical because of the number of students who either decide to leave postsecondary institutions during this period or who get off to a bad start and never quite recover. Academic behaviour such as contact with faculty, grades, academic involvement, and identification is particularly important. However, the social aspect of postsecondary education is extremely important as well; making friends and interacting with peers is helpful in both personal and academic contexts. The degree to which students become integrated and involved with their institutions is crucial for development and success. Of course all of these academic and social connections are experienced differentially by the various sub-populations that attend higher education.

- Contacts with faculty, particularly out-of-class contact, though infrequent, remain a powerful influence on academic success. Canadian and American research, along with numerous student surveys, uniformly and consistently arrive at this conclusion.

- Differences exist in the impact of residence life/commuter life on student experiences—better integration, higher marks, and greater retention are commonplace for residence students, or more generally, for those who become involved whether they live on campus or not.

- Many students work during the first year.

- The first year is a source of considerable stress, especially of academic and financial natures. When students are asked after their first year what they would do differently, they indicate that they would not only study harder or more attentively but start earlier and manage their time better. Getting good grades is a major source of stress.

- Despite the stress and difficulty, a majority of students make it through the first year and indicate a fair amount of satisfaction.

- Educational outcomes of the first year encompass success and persistence (good grades and retention), or marginal success and persistence (poor grades and retention), and it is especially among the latter group that First-Year Experience programs can make a big difference.

According to the national survey, First-Year Experience programs and services are characterized by the following:

- Most universities offer basic dimensions such as orientation, academic, career and personal counselling, faculty development, and residence life programs. Quite a few have family and support networks for new students, equity programs, course placement/learning skills centres, and short-term success seminars. Fewer offer skills assessment, mathematics development, introductory discipline courses, or University 101 term courses.

- At community colleges, the pattern is similar except that fewer colleges offer family involvement, gender equity, course clusters, student cohort formation, and residence life programs.

- The programs tend to be offered in a passive rather than an active or intrusive mode. Students access many services on a voluntary or drop-in basis. The programs are also often reactive, responding to requests for a particular therapeutic or educational service.

- The majority of programs, services and centres for first-year students are offered by student service professionals and student volunteers rather than faculty members. An integrated model of delivery occurs but is much less frequent. The academic sector delivers services and courses promoting intellectual growth while student services are more holistic, dealing broadly with academic and non-academic student development.

Evaluation and assessment of first-year programs and services takes place to a greater extent at universities than colleges. Where assessment is done at the colleges it tends to be based on attendance, student evaluations/satisfaction

surveys, and especially student grades. Standardized testing of student skills, especially mathematics and English, is also prevalent. Universities tend to use statistical comparisons, participation rates and surveys, retention statistics and studies, pre- and post-test skill comparisons, student experience surveys, course evaluations and assessments, exit and graduation surveys, and residence life surveys.

The national survey revealed very different organizational cultures and climates in terms of student association involvement, technological support, barriers and obstacles, cancellation of programs, and collaborative efforts concerning first-year student integration.

Are student associations actively involved in helping first-year students become integrated into their new institutional homes? Student associations were much more involved at universities than colleges. At universities, for example, peer helpers or student volunteers are largely responsible for the success of orientation, tutoring, mentoring, learning, and writing skill centres/programs, and career advisement. At other universities and colleges, however, student associations are only minimally involved or are involved mainly in the delivery and not the design and planning of activities. Technological support of first-year student integration was low at universities and even lower for the college sector. University and college respondents indicated increasing reliance on technology to provide information to students and for record keeping and administrative procedures, but were unsure whether or not the use of technology really facilitated first-year student integration.

A substantial number of universities and colleges have experienced barriers or obstacles in implementing First-Year Experience programs or services. The biggest obstacle is simply financial—budget reductions and increased enrollment are seen as difficulties. The absence of human resources and other demands on student service professionals' time represents another constraint. Negative attitudes and values are a second barrier to improving of programs and services for students in their first year. Faculty resistance to what they regard as non-academic or remedial education mitigates against change. Faculty often consider these kinds of programs or services as superfluous, coddling, neither deserving of course credit nor fostering independence and self reliance. A third obstacle is structural: space, scheduling, jurisdiction, co-ordination and integration, particularly in highly decentralized institutions, and the difficulty of tracking, collecting information and communicating with students, all represent difficulties.

Yet it is known that a number of institutions have made innovative improvements in first-year programming despite shrinking government funding. Institutions that did not experience barriers to change cite the following factors as aspects of their success:

- An organizational culture that supports entering students (institutional responsibility)
- An investment approach to resource allocations (maximization of limited funds and human resources)
- Educational structures and processes that provide practical applications of the organizational culture and investment approach to decision making
- Long time periods to develop the necessary programs (long-term planning)
- Active support and co-operation of students.

Given the obstacles and barriers to an enhanced First-Year Experience it is not surprising that institutions, particularly at the college level, report program cancellations. Budget cuts and negative attitudes toward first-year services are anathema to their survival and success. The value of these programs for student persistence, satisfaction and achievement and for institutional accountability is often not recognized.

About two-thirds of Canadian universities and colleges report collaboration between units, departments and disciplines in support of first-year development. Most of this collaboration, especially for the colleges, takes place across student services, registrarial or administrative units. University faculty members are often involved in an

advisory capacity or in the delivery of First-Year Experience programs, but academic departments are seldom the administrative units responsible. Student service professionals are rarely involved in the design and delivery of academic programs or courses. Student service professionals, however, appear to be the original driving force for broad-based involvement and participation across campuses.

Institutional programs and first-year student experiences come together on a number of issues. Student emphasis on careers and the skills necessary to obtain meaningful jobs and a good quality of life coincide with postsecondary institutional emphasis on career counselling, programs and centres, learning and basic skill development, and student success courses. However, most of these programs are offered outside academic disciplines and programs. They are still marginalized or peripheral to mainstream academe. For numerous students who are uncertain about their educational or vocational directions, formal academic channels offer little assistance. For the many students who would benefit from learning and study skills, time management and writing skills, academic disciplines per se have little to offer.

Students tell us that the transition to postsecondary education is a period of change, uncertainty, adaptation, adjustment, stress and accommodation. Postsecondary institutions attempt to facilitate the transition with liaison, orientation, family involvement/support programs, peer tutoring and mentoring, academic/personal counselling, and residence life services. As discussed earlier, these programs tend to be passive or reactive rather than active or intrusive; they depend on voluntary self-selection into often therapeutic educational programs. The dilemma here is that those who would benefit most from the services are the least likely to select them voluntarily; but if the programs were compulsory, many who do not need remedial services would be forced to attend.

Institutional programs and first-year student experiences do not come together on a number of issues. First and foremost, students need and benefit from the intentional, integrated development of the whole student, but institutions operate primarily in a segmented or specialized manner. The academic side and the student services professionals all too often do not co-operate and collaborate to deal with holistic student development. Faculty concentrate on disciplinary content, intellectual or academic skills, and traditional course organization, management, and grading practices leaving learning, job and life skills, and other non-academic development issues to support units.

Second, students expect postsecondary institutions to be learning communities, but the institutions rarely act as communities—that is, as places with common values and norms of behaviour, shared expectations and frequent interaction. Faculty-student and student-student interaction have very positive consequences for student learning and integration, but these processes are often by-products rather than intentionally structured and planned features of campus cultures. Student involvement and integration are too often left to chance.

Third, students exhibit considerable stress in coping and adapting to their new institutional environments, in particular over academic, time, and financial matters. Pressures to get good grades, manage their time like a professional, and increasingly to finance their education while at the same time having friends and a "life" are substantial. Universities and colleges tend not to provide enough deliberate and effective assistance to students with the realities that they will face, especially financial realities. Few programs and services were mentioned by institutions in this area, and recent government declarations indicate that postsecondary attendance will become much more expensive for students.

Finally, a major gap still exists between the educational philosophies of students and their institutions. Students appear to be looking for broad value-added education or for institutions to develop their knowledge, skills, and talents beyond their current competency levels, so that at graduation they have the best qualifications to compete in a very tough labour market and to function effectively in a new knowledge- and information-rich society. Institutions on the other hand appear to be seeking to provide the narrow opportunity for students to develop

themselves academically. Within postsecondary education there is still debate and tension over whether or not institutions will take responsibility for the effectiveness of their educational structures and processes. Within and across institutions there is conflict between those who favour individual responsibility, survival competition, and sink or swim challenges, and those who favour institutional responsibility, co-operation and assistance, and value-added student development. Of course individual initiative and collective effectiveness are not mutually exclusive; they are opposite sides of the same coin.

Perhaps what is required is a change in educational philosophy from academic social Darwinism to a partnership between learners and their institutions, not simply a customer or client orientation. With tuition and other costs of attendance likely to continue increasing, and with a more differentiated postsecondary system based on institutional type, reputation, accessibility, and cost, students and universities/colleges need to choose each other based on accurate information of their distinct nature, purposes, benefits, and limitations. The fit or matching of enlightened student choices with university/college cultures, effectiveness, and resources represents a partnership with great promise but one that remains to be negotiated.

Institutions have experienced a real change in philosophy and approach toward First-Year Experience programs and services. In the past there was much less concern, attention, and care for student progress/development. It was largely up to the students. Now many more universities and colleges are explicitly and intentionally creating programs, services, and educational experiences that enhance student progress and success. What is especially interesting is that this deliberate construction of effective first-year programs comes at a time when facilities and resources are squeezed. Some institutions make resource investment decisions that are expected to have good returns not only for student growth and development but also for institutional effectiveness and public accountability. With change in the external financial climate and increasing public demand for accountability, many institutions treat resource allocations as investments. These institutions ask, "Where will the increasingly scarce resources have the greatest impact in terms of enhancing student retention, success, learning, skill acquisition, graduation, and citizenship outcomes?"

On the other hand, some institutions are making primarily accounting decisions to reduce expenditures in order to balance the books, with little or no view to student outcomes or long-term consequences. For these institutions it is a case of taking the path of least resistance in cutting costs to match declining government support. Financial accountability may have taken precedence over public and institutional accountability, which is the effective and efficient use of resources to produce desired outcomes and purposes.

The "investment" orientation and the "bookkeeping" approach represent common but very different reactions to the financial crisis facing Canadian postsecondary education. One aspect that distinguishes these two approaches or orientations is the extent to which they rely on measurement, specifically research and evaluation, to assess the extent to which programs/services are working or not working (i.e., are effective in realizing goals and objectives in a cost efficient manner). Institutions that have improved first-year structures and processes tend to collect and analyze data regarding program effectiveness and efficiency. They have some data, information, knowledge, understanding upon which to make resource allocation decisions. Without data or information, the decisions are likely to be based on beliefs, myths, and prejudices about first-year students or program impacts. Consequently, a major influence on change and improvement has been the provision of timely, applied evidence concerning the outcomes of first-year programs and services. It is difficult to argue with assessments and evaluations that document what works and what doesn't.

Policy Recommendations

The survey of Canadian post-secondary institutions and First-Year Experience cases profiled identify general program characteristics or features that work in produce positive student out-

comes. These aspects are summarized and presented as normative policy suggestions to highlight their importance:

1. *A positive first-year experience should be the direct result of universities and colleges achieving their broader essential educational missions.*

   The primary educational objective is to develop students' academic and intellectual knowledge, skills, talents, abilities, attitudes, and behaviours.

   Postsecondary institutions need to be more intrusive or pro-active in ensuring that organizational goals are achieved. Reactive or reactionary service delivery merely treats symptoms; passive programs fail to reach students who would most benefit.

   Activities and programs should be organized in a deliberate and intentional manner to achieve specific institutional goals. Quite often services and activities have evolved to reflect the perceived needs of individuals whether or not these are consistent with the student's own development and the institution's responsibilities.

2. *A student- or learner-centered approach should be adopted.*

   This statement is not inconsistent with the above emphasis on achieving institutional goals and objectives through intentional programs and activities. It does not imply simple satisfaction of individual wants and desires.

   A customer, client, service, student, or learner-centered orientation means that the institution dedicates its resources to improvement in students' academic and intellectual knowledge, skills, talents, abilities, and behaviours.

   Instructional and service programs should add value or develop students rather than to simply sort them out or differentiate them along certain dimensions.

   Partnerships or reciprocal understandings between students and their institutions that are founded on mutual respect for what each brings to the quest should be articulated.

3. *An emphasis on holistic student growth and development in the first year works better than a narrow or exclusive emphasis on technical academic expertise and specialization.*

   While academic and intellectual competence are important institutional objectives, students succeed when they develop good interpersonal relationships with peers, faculty, and staff; establish their personal identities, careers, and lifestyles; acquire personal health and well-being practices, and begin to develop an overall approach to learning and life.

   Student success and progress should be defined comprehensively rather than as simply getting good grades.

   Fostering student success and progress requires a campuswide approach. Narrow disciplinary boundaries and academic territoriality need to be transcended. Connections and working partnerships between the academic and the student service functions of institutions need to be forged.

4. *The active involvement of students in post-secondary programs and services is absolutely essential.*

   Students learn and grow primarily as a direct result of what they do rather than what others do. Consequently, active participation in, and identification with, all aspects of campus life will enhance student outcomes.

   Students learn a great deal from their friends, peers, and mentors. These interactions should not be left to chance but should be structured and facilitated to provide positive educational outcomes. The establishment of intellectual mentors and personal friendships should be an integral part of The First-Year Experience in postsecondary education. The people that students meet and connect with in colleges and universities should become significant in both their learning and in their lives.

Campuses are learning communities and as such they have key values and behavioural expectations for their members. These codes of conduct and behaviour should be made explicit and members should be held to them.

5. *The first year of postsecondary schooling is an extremely important period during which students establish the bases for subsequent educational success or failure. Frontloading of institutional resources is recommended.*

   Institutions should know exactly who their entering students are demographically, socio-economically, and in terms of ethnic diversity and prior learning. Tracking systems should be used not simply for research purposes but for practical, applied purposes in order to identify potential early leavers and to develop effective programs and services.

   - Educational structures and processes that enhance student success should be identified and supported.
   - Again, such programs should be intrusive, intentional, holistic, involving, and developmental.
   - The benefits of frontloading are longer-term learning outcomes for students, financial stability for institutions, and public accountability.

6. *Institutions should assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and services.*

   - Measurement of the value added by university and college activities provides a way to make sensible resource allocation decisions.
   - These decisions are best regarded as investments and should be assessed on their returns in terms of the development of key student learning outcomes and competencies. Resource allocations should not be treated as simply costs or line expenditures but should be evaluated for the benefits and value produced.

7. *Finally, and most importantly, Canadian postsecondary institutions should have leaders with educational vision. This vision should include a recognition of the fundamental importance of the first year, advocating improvement in learning structures and processes and rewarding the commitment, dedication and effectiveness of faculty and staff who are good at developing the most important resource of the future—our students.*

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Research Methods

The survey of Canadian postsecondary institutions had four main goals. The first was to obtain studies on the nature of first-year students and their experience. The second was to describe the kinds of programs and the delivery characteristics targeted to new students at these institutions. The third purpose was to identify the institutional context or climate under which these programs function. Finally, we also wanted to highlight case studies illustrating best practices in supporting first-year student success.

Survey Population

Institutions belonging to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Association of University and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) were surveyed. AUCC mailed questionnaires to institutions with student populations of 500 or more for the 1993-1994 academic year. ACCC sent letters to presidents of colleges and institutes requesting them to identify a contact for the survey. The questionnaire was then mailed to institutions that responded to the request. The questionnaires were sent to senior academic and student service administrators for distribution to individuals with the appropriate expertise. The institutions that responded are listed below.

Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was reviewed by institutional researchers at the Canadian Association of Institutional Researchers conference in Halifax (July, 1993) and by representatives from AUCC and ACCC. Translation services were provided by ACCC. The questionnaire was designed to guide rather than elicit a specific response. Respondents were encouraged to submit any information regarding the first year rather than strictly adhere to the questions and response matrix. The instrument (see Appendix B) is divided into four parts:

- Research on the First Year

- First-Year Program, Services and Centres by Delivery Characteristics
- Institutional Climate
- General Information

In Part A, respondents answered questions about research into the characteristics of entering students, their first-year experience and first-year outcomes (i.e., retention, attrition, or satisfaction), and attached any existing information including reports, articles, and surveys. In Part B, respondents identified the programs, services, and centres designed to support first-year student integration, academic development, and orientation, according to delivery characteristics such as mandate, target population, credit, contact hours, schedule, administration, cost, and evaluation techniques. In Part C, the questions focussed on perceived barriers to student success and collaborative first-year initiatives. In Part D, general questions were posed about the utility and priority of this kind of information.

Survey Administration

The English version of the survey was mailed by AUCC and ACCC in November, 1994 with responses accepted up to March, 1995. The French version of the survey was mailed in January with responses accepted to May, 1995. The Institute for Social Research at York University received the completed questionnaires and constructed a data set for analysis.

Response Rates

The response rates for the survey were good; 42 or 78% of AUCC institutions, and 57 or 52% of the 109 ACCC institutions who identified contacts responded. Many submissions provided extensive documentation including survey instruments, brochures, videos, reports, and research documents. A list of AUCC and ACCC respondent institutions follows.

Respondent institutions from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada included:

Acadia University
Augustana University
Brock University
Carleton University
Concordia College
Lakehead University
McGill University
McMaster University
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Mount Saint Vincent University
Mount Allison University
Université du Québec
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi
Université du Québec à Montreal
Université Laval
University of Alberta
University of Calgary
University of Guelph
University of Lethbridge
University of Manitoba
University of New Brunswick
University of Prince Edward Island
University of Regina
Queen's University at Kingston
Ryerson Polytechnic University
Saint Mary's University
Simon Fraser University
St. Thomas University
St. Francis Xavier University
Trent University
Trinity Western University
Université de Moncton
Université d' Ottawa
University of Saskatchewan
University of Toronto
University of Victoria
University of Waterloo
University of Western Ontario
University of Windsor
University of Winnipeg
Wilfrid Laurier University
York University

Respondent institutions from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges were:

Alberta College of Art
Alberta Vocational College
Algonquin College
Canadore College
CEGEP de Jonquiere
CEGEP Andre-Laurendeau
CEGEP Saint-Laurent
Centennial College

Champlain-Lennoxville
College de Bois-de Boulogne
College de Maisonneuve
College de Rosemont
College de Sherbrooke
College Edouard-Montpetit
College of New Caledonia
Conestoga College
Cumberland Regional College
Cypress Hills Regional College
Dawson College
Eastern College
Fanshawe College
George Brown College
Georgian College
Humber College
Institut de Technologie Agro-Alimentaire
John Abbott College
La Cite Collegiale
Lakeland College
Lambton College of Applied Arts and Technology
Langara College Ontario
Lethbridge Community College
Loyalist College
Marianopolis College
Mohawk College
Mount Royal College
Niagara College Ontario
North Island College
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
Okanagan University College
Prairie West Regional College
Red Deer College
Red River Community College
Saint John School of Nursing
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Sault College
Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology
Sheridan College
Sir Sanford Fleming College
South Winnipeg Technical Centre
Southeast Regional College
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
St. Clair College
St. Lawrence College, Cornwall Campus
University College of the Cariboo
Vancouver Community College
Vanier College
Westviking College

Limitations

Since the survey was sent to senior postsecondary managers and then at times distributed to several departments, responses may reflect respondent knowledge rather than provide a definitive record of the services of the institution. Survey questions were also on occasion interpreted differently by respondents. Blank responses in the "Program by Delivery Characteristics" response matrix may simply indicate item non-response rather than a lack of service. Some responses were "See attached," so the categorization and interpretation of the material became the responsibility of the researcher. One uniform procedure for the completion of questionnaires was not always followed. For example, some decentralized institutions collated the responses from a variety of departments to form a single survey response; other institutions, several responses which the researcher collated; and centralized institutions, one response. A few institutions redesigned the structure of the "Program by Delivery Characteristics" response matrix to fit their unique delivery structure, particularly when a first-year office offered a range of services. In respect for the obvious complexity and diversity of postsecondary structures and the descriptive and qualitative nature of the data, we looked for common themes and patterns of response as well as unique or creative developments at individual institutions.

Appendix B

Survey of the First Year Experience in Canadian Postsecondary Institutions

This survey is designed to elicit detailed qualitative information on the characteristics and success of existing first year programs at Canadian postsecondary institutions. We want to know what you are doing and with what success.

Use the survey as a guide to submitting information that will assist in planning and accounting for student success in the first year. The survey contains the following sections:

Part A: **Research on the First Year** - the characteristics of entering students, their first year experience and first year outcomes (i.e. retention, attrition, or satisfaction)

Part B: **First Year Programs, Services, and Centres by Delivery Characteristics** - the resources your institution offers to support first year student integration, academic development, and orientation (i.e. first year seminars, learning skills workshops, programs and services promoting accessibility)

Part C: **Institutional Climate** - the context of the students' first year experience (i.e. barriers or obstacles to the development, interdepartmental initiatives to support first year students)

Part D: **General Information** - general questions about this survey and the use of the information (i.e. identification of case studies, topics for conference)

Guidelines

1. Please use the survey as a guide to the type of information we are seeking. We would be pleased to answer any questions about aspects of the survey.

2. Please identify individuals who will assist in compiling and completing a copy or portion of this survey:

Name	Department/Unit	Topic

Additional copies are attached for circulation.

3. Please enclose background documentation (i.e. flyers, brochures, minutes, etc.) on first year initiatives, programs, projects, committees, and research.

4. If your first year initiatives are not represented in the questions of this survey, please add the information.

5. Return the survey in the self-addressed envelope.

6. We would appreciate return of the survey by **December 20, 1994.**

7. For questions on university services and programs contact:

Judy Chapman
Coordinator, University Entrance Program
University of Regina
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Tel: 306-585-5081
Fax: 306-585-5203
CA*NET: CHAPMAN@MAX.CC.UREGINA.CA

For questions on college and institute services, programs, and research contact:

Peter Dietsche
Professor of Psychology
Humber College
205 Humber College Blvd.
Etobicoke, ON M9W 5L7
Tel: 416-675-6622 (ext. 4029)
Fax: 416-675-3793
CA*NET: DIETSCHE@ADMIN.HUMBERC.ON.CA

For questions about first year experience research in a university setting contact:

Paul Grayson
Director, Institute for Social Research
Admin. Student Building
York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, ON M3J 1P3
Tel: 416-736-5061
Fax: 416-736-5749
CA*NET: GRAYSON@VM1.YORKU.CA

For questions about evaluation and assessment research contact:

Sid Gilbert
Professor of Sociology
University of Guelph
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1
Tel: 519-824-4120 (ext. 3546)
Fax: 519-837-9561
CA*NET: SIDG1@CSS.UOGUELPH.CA

8. One university and one college or institute respondent will be randomly selected to receive complementary airfare, accommodation, and registration for the Canadian - American FYE conference.

Part A: Research on the First Year of Study

1. Do you collect background information for first year students outside of what is collected on the application form? (i.e. background/entry characteristics, parental education, resident/commuter, language spoken at home, numeracy, literacy, skills, attitudes and values at entry, finances, vocational/educational/program certainty, confidence/self-concept)

   1. Yes

   2. No

   Please outline and attach any reports, surveys or documentation.

2. Do you measure student experience in the first year? (i.e. program characteristics, faculty-student interaction, peer interaction, registration patterns, academic/deviant behaviour, frequency of studying, homework completion and/or class attendance, academic/personal/social adjustment, use of services)

1. Yes

2. No

Please outline and attach any reports, surveys or documentation.

3. Do you measure the outcomes of the first year? (i.e. knowledge, skills, values at the end of the first year, satisfaction, commitment, perception of program/ program change, intent to leave institution, retention)

1. Yes

2. No

Please outline and attach any reports, surveys or documentation.

Part B: Programs, Services, and Centres by Delivery Characteristics

In the matrix below are typical themes or areas providing programs, services and centres targeted to first year students. Go across the row for each program, service, and centre and indicate the delivery characteristic by writing a short annotation in each cell.

If the design of your first year support does not fit this matrix, please tell us about it in your own way and/or attach descriptive information (i.e. some institutions package or combine first year support).

An example is provided in the first row.

Programs, Services, and Centres	**Does your institution offer this service? Title of Service**	**Institutionally Initiated (compulsory) or Student Initiated (voluntary)**	**Identify the target population and number of students using the service or percentage of total first year population**	**Does the program/service or centre provide credit towards program completion?**
(Example) *Articulation or liaison prior to admission*	*Yes "The "U" in you!", a satellite presentation to remote SCN sites*	*Voluntary registration*	*General public with access to satellite network; 75 registrations in session for the 1994 fall term*	*No*
Articulation or liaison prior to admission				
Orientation after admission				
Family involvement/ support programs				
Equity Access programs, services or centres for a target group				
Aboriginal student programs, services or centres				
Race/ethnic/ cultural student programs, services or centres				

When is the service provided? Identify the number of contact hours per term	What area is administratively responsible for design, delivery, and evaluation?	What area or who delivers the program or service?	What is the direct unit cost to the student?	Are outcomes measured and evaluated? How? Please include studies
This is offered in June (prior to the start of the first semester) for two hours	*Registrar's Office*	*The High School Liaison officer with the assistance of voluntary students*	*None*	*Yes. Number of admissions by number registered in session. (report attached)*

Programs, Services, and Centres	Does your institution offer this service? Title of Service	Institutionally Initiated (compulsory) or Student Initiated (voluntary)	Identify the target population and number of students using the service or percentage of total first year population	Does the program/service or centre provide credit towards program completion?
Gender programs, services, or centres				
Course placement tests (i.e. tied to recommendations on course level for English, etc.)				
Assessment of literacy, numeracy learning skills, etc.				
Academic advising (i.e. course and program selection)				
Language development programs, services, or centres				
Mathematics development programs, services, or centres				
A learning skills centre				
Short-term student success seminar(s) or workshop(s)				
University 101 term course				

When is the service provided? Identify the number of contact hours per term	What area is administratively responsible for design, delivery, and evaluation?	What area or who delivers the program or service?	What is the direct unit cost to the student?	Are outcomes measured and evaluated? How? Please include studies

Programs, Services, and Centres	Does your institution offer this service? Title of Service	Institutionally Initiated (compulsory) or Student Initiated (voluntary)	Identify the target population and number of students using the service or percentage of total first year population	Does the program/service or centre provide credit towards program completion?
Introductory discipline or survey course integrating first year concepts				
Course cluster formation to support discipline integration				
Student cohort formation to facilitate interaction				
Structured empathetic/ instructional links between students/ teachers (i.e. peer tutoring)				
Career Counseling				
Personal Counseling				
Faculty/ teaching development				
Residence life				

When is the service provided? Identify the number of contact hours per term	What area is administratively responsible for design, delivery, and evaluation?	What area or who delivers the program or service?	What is the direct unit cost to the student?	Are outcomes measured and evaluated? How? Please include studies

Please add information about programs, services or centres at your institution not covered in the matrix and attach any existing descriptions.

Part C: Institutional Climate

1. To what extent, are your student associations or unions actively involved in first year student integration?

Circle a number on the scale.

Not involved				Involved
1	2	3	4	5

Briefly provide details on how this involvement occurs.

2. To what extent does your institution rely on specific technological supports to facilitate student integration? (i.e. telephone registration, on-line question and answer databases, automated payment systems, televised orientation)

Circle a number on the scale.

Not reliant				Reliant
1	2	3	4	5

Briefly provide details.

3. Have you experienced any barriers or obstacles to implementing new programs or services for students in their first year?

1. Yes

2. No

Please provide a brief explanation.

4. Have you cancelled any programs or services designed for students in their first year?

1. Yes

2. No

Please indicate which ones, reasons and circumstances.

5. Is the first year of study at your institution the first year of postsecondary study for the majority of your students?

1. Yes

2. No

Please provide a brief explanation.

6. Is your institution involved in a collaborative effort between units, departments, and disciplines to support first year development? (i.e. special committees, new organizational structures to support the first year, student service/teaching/unit/peers/discipline integration)

1. Yes

2. No

Please provide brief details.

Part D: General Information

1. We would like to profile ten to twelve institutions that successfully enhance the first year of study. Is there someone at your institution who would be willing to prepare an institutional case study or profile?

   Name:
   Department:
   Tel:
   Fax:
   CA*NET:

   Profile area:

2. Is there someone at your institution who would be willing and able to address the 1995 Canadian - American FYE conference?

   Name:
   Department:
   Tel:
   Fax:
   CA*NET:

   Topic:

3. Would you be interested in a clearinghouse that would catalogue and disseminate first year research?

   1. Yes

   2. No

4. Would you be interested in an organized service that would assist you in developing, designing, and evaluating programs?

   1. Yes

   2. No

5. We would appreciate any additional comments you might have.

6. Please consider the following:

- √ Are the names of all respondents to this survey listed?
- √ Are documents attached? (i.e. attrition studies, special first year initiative/committees, programs, student surveys, completion analyses, educational outcomes; program, service or centre information)
- √ Return your response before December 20, 1994 to:

Institute for Social Research
York University
4700 Keele Street
North York, ON M3J 1P3

Thank you for responding to this survey. The information will be useful to institutions for planning and in dealing with quality and accountability issues.

The results of this survey will be included in a monograph to be published by the National Center for the Freshman Year Experience (USC).

Appendix C

Individuals Who Completed the Survey for Undergraduate Institutions

Acadia University
- Dr. Dima Utgoff, Director of Student Affairs
- Terry Lane, Director, Counselling Centre
- Kim Meade, International Student Advisor
- Paula Cook, Assistant Director, Admissions and Student Assistance

Augustana University College
- Dr. Janet Wright, VP Academic Affairs and Academic Dean

Brock University
- Dr. David Jordan, Dean, Student Affairs

Carleton University
- Imelda Mulvihill, Office of the Vice-President (Academic)

Concordia College
- Rev. Ronald Jones, Vice-President Student Services
- Dr. Richard Willie, Vice-President Academic

Concordia University
- Mr. Brian Counihan, Dean of Students
- Dr. Sup Mei Braub, Director, Counselling and Development
- Dr. Alan Hochstein, Associate Vice-Rector, Academic (Curriculum and Planning)

Lakehead University
- Ms. Joy Himmelman, Director, Student Services
- Pentle Paularinne
- Mrs. Kerrie-Lee Clarke, Institutional Research Officer

McGill University
- Dr. Janet G. Donald, Centre for University Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Irwin Gopnik, Dean of Students

Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Dr. Donna Hardy Cox, Student Affairs and Services

Mount Allison University
- Charlie Hunter, Director, Student Services

Queen's University of Kingston
- Barbara Roberts, Special Needs Office
- Allison Morgan, Registrar
- Graham Brown, Director of Residences
- Associate Deans of the Faculties
- Dr. P. Young, Dean of Women
- Dr. M. Condra, Director of Counselling
- Susan Wilcox, Instructional Development Centre
- Julien Blackstock, Queens 101 Program

Ryerson Polytechnic University
- Debbie Chant, President's Office
- Marion Creery, Student Services
- Gene Logel, Admissions/Liaison
- Ron Swirsky, University Planning Office

St. Francis Xavier University
- Janet Stark, Deans' and Registrar's Office

St. Mary's University
- Eric Smith, Institutional Research
- Christine Tordon, Admissions Office
- Dr. David Leitch, Atlantic Centre Disabled
- Beth Poulous, Counseling Services
- Kati Kilfoil, Residence
- Lisa Andrews, Career Counseling
- Sarah Morris, Peer Programs

St. Thomas University
- Doreen Vautour, Student Affairs

Simon Fraser University
- Roberta Maboy, Office of Student Services

Trent University
- Heather Avery, Principal, Traill College
- Joyce Miller, Native Studies
- Bob Annett, Head, Otonabee College
- Teresa Topic, Head, Robinson College
- Jeff MacNab, Assistant Registrar
- Ada Meceham, Coordinator, Counselling

Trinity Western University
- Tom Bulick, VP Student Affairs
- Kurt Lundberg, Counselling and Learning Resources
- Jacob D. Thiessen, Dean's Office

University of Alberta (by department responding to survey)
- Engineering
- Dentistry
- Native Studies
- Physical Education
- Nursing
- Arts
- Education
- Rehabilitation Medicine
- Science
- Registrar
- Students' Union
- Student Services
- Housing/Residence Life
- WISEST: Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology

University of Calgary
- Dr. Lorna Cammaert, Associate Vice-President and Chief Academic Officer for Student Affairs
- Ms. Lynn Kelly Sabash, First Year Experience Coordinator
- Ms. Alison Heal, High School Liaison Coordinator

University of Guelph
- Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch, Office of First Year Studies
- Brian Pettigrew, Student Environment Study Group
- Nancy Clendenning, Associate VP Academic and Registrar
- Carla Bradshaw, Alumni Office
- Brian Sullivan, Student Affairs
- Andre Auger, Counselling and Student Resources
- Jim Pickworth, Hotel and Food Administration
- Fred Ramprashad, College of Biological Sciences
- Ruth Gillespie, Teaching Support Services
- Irene Thompson, Student Housing Services

University of Lethbridge
- Dr. Keith McCurdy, Dean of Student Affairs
- Barbara Williams, Recruitment Coordinator
- Heather Mirau, Manager, Hospitality Services

Université de Moncton
- Marielle Prfontaine, Vice-recteur adjointe l'enseignement et la recherche
- Viateur Viel, Registraire
- Gilles Nadeau, Directeur, Services aux étudiants et étudiantes

University of New Brunswick
- Michael Shanks, Registrar's Office
- Tom Austin, Dean of Students
- Mary Williams, Assistant Dean of Students
- Judith Potter, Extension Program Director

University of Ottawa
- Heather Blanck, Institutional Research
- Carole Grenier, Student Affairs

University of Prince Edward Island
- Andrew Robb, Director, University 100
- Blaine Jensen, Student Services

Université du Québec
- M. Pierre Nadeau, Secretaire general
- Danielle Pageau, Recherche institutionnelle

Université du Québec à Chicoutimi
- Renaud Thriault, Services aux étudiants

Université du Québec à Montreal
- Ygal Leibu, Registraire
- Pierre Gladu, Service a la vie etudiante
- Yvon Lussier, Bureau de la recherche institutionnelle

University of Regina
- Alex Kelly, Office of Institutional Research
- Richard Hordern, President, Luther College

University of Saskatchewan
- Vera Pezer, Assistant VP (Student Services)
- Ken Smith, Registrar
- Barrie Dubray, University Studies Group
- Pauline Melis, Assistant to the VP (Academic)

Tracy Sletto, High School Liaison Officer
Helen Henderson, University Studies Group
Wayne Skrapek, College of Arts and Science

University of Toronto
Dr. John Kirkness, Provost Advisor on Undergraduate Education
Dr. David Graham, Director, Counselling and Learning Skills Service

University of Victoria
Jim Griffith, Director, Student and Ancillary Services
Janet Sheppard, Counselling Services
Joseph A. Parsons, Counselling Services
Mary Jane McLachlan, Counselling Services

University of Waterloo
Peter Hopkins, Student Affairs
Steve Little, Secondary School Liaison
Robin Barks, Academic Affairs
Julie Cole, Federation of Students

University of Windsor
Dr. Richard Price, Dean of Student Affairs
Dr. Barbara Niewitecka, Academic Advisory Centre
Mrs. Brooke White, Academic Advisory Centre

University of Winnipeg
Monica Wood, Enrollment Management
John Hofley, Dean of Arts and Science
Herb Mays, Associate Vice-President
Nancy Latocki, Director of Admissions
Linda Simpson, Director of Records

Western University of Ontario
Tom Siess, Commissioner for Undergraduate Student Life
Jack Russel, Student Development Centre
Rod Skinkle, Office of the Commissioner for Undergraduate Student Life

Wilfrid Laurier University
Ms. Fran Wdowczyk, Student Life
Mr. Fred Nichols, Dean of Students
Dr. Dale Fogle, Director Counselling
Dr. Richard Fuke, Chair, First Year Experience

York University
Nancy Accinnelli, President's Office/ Director of Arts Advising Centre
Don Murdoch, Faculty of Fine Arts, Liaison and Advising
Julie Parna Shiel, Glendon Advising and Liaison
Gilles Fortier, Glendon Student Affairs/ Housing
Jack Gillis, Environmental Studies
Laura Sibley, Faculty of Pure and Applied Science
Judy Libman, Norman Bethune College, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences
S. Barnes, Director, Office of Student and Academic Services, Atkinson College
S. Pope, Director, Counselling Services, Atkinson College
D. Stadnicki, Master's Office, Atkinson College
Renata Faverin, Director, Faculty of Arts Advising Centre

Appendix D
Description of the University Population

All Canadian universities and colleges with student populations over 500 for the 1993-1994 academic year were surveyed.

University Survey Population Respondents

Universities surveyed	Province	Respondents
Acadia University	Nova Scotia	y
Augustana University College	Alberta	y
Bishop's University	Québec	
Brandon University	Manitoba	
Brock University	Ontario	y
Carleton University	Ontario	y
Concordia University	Québec	y
Concordia College	Alberta	y
Dalhousie University	Nova Scotia	
Lakehead University	Ontario	y
Laurentian University of Sudbury	Ontario	
McGill University	Québec	y
McMaster University	Ontario	y
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Newfoundland	y
Mount Saint Vincent University	Nova Scotia	y
Mount Allison University	Nova Scotia	y
Queen's University at Kingston	Ontario	y

Ryerson Polytechnic University	Ontario	y
Saint Mary's University	Nova Scotia	y
Simon Fraser University	British Columbia	y
St. Thomas University	New Brunswick	y
St. Francis Xavier University	Nova Scotia	y
Trent University	Ontario	y
Trinity Western University	British Columbia	y
University College of Cape Breton	Nova Scotia	
Université de Moncton	New Brunswick	y
Université de Montreal	Québec	
Université d' Ottawa	Ontario	y
Université du Québec	Québec	y
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	Québec	y
Université du Québec à Hull	Québec	
Université du Québec à Montreal	Québec	y
Université du Québec à Rimouski	Québec	
Université du Québec à Trois-Riviéres	Québec	
Université de Sainte-Anne	Nova Scotia	
Université de Sherbrooke	Québec	
Université Laval	Québec	y
University of Alberta	Alberta	y
University of British Columbia	British Columbia	
University of Calgary	Alberta	y

University of Guelph	Ontario	y
University of Lethbridge	Alberta	y
University of Manitoba	Manitoba	y*
University of New Brunswick	New Brunswick	y
University of Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island	y
University of Regina	Saskatchewan	y
University of Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan	y
University of Toronto	Ontario	y
University of Victoria	British Columbia	y
University of Waterloo	Ontario	y*
University of Western Ontario	Ontario	y
University of Windsor	Ontario	y
University of Winnipeg	Manitoba	y
Wilfrid Laurier University	Ontario	y
York University	Ontario	y

y* = submitted material but not survey

Appendix E

Additional Responses to Survey *(see Appendix B)*

Responses are listed verbatim from the surveys. Please direct any questions to the individuals listed by responding college or university in Appendix C. Submitted documentation includes articles, reports, minutes, research papers, and papers presented at conferences. A number of blank surveys were also submitted.

List of Documents and Surveys by Institution

University of Calgary

Incoming student information form (Background information, expectations).

1993 Incoming student survey executive summary.

Trent University

College application form (background characteristics, college preference, request for residence, preferences).

Residence questionnaire (lifestyle and preference questions).

McGill University

Survey of McGill student university experience. Centre for University Teaching and Learning. Educational background, educational activity and involvement. Quantitative and qualitative responses.

University of Guelph

University college project. Report from the Executive Committee, Senate, (June 20, 1989).

The University of Guelph's response to the learning needs of entering students. A report of the Senate Committee on Educational development. (May, 1990).

University College Project. Report to Senate. (May 1991).

The first year experience: Responding to the challenge. University College Project Advisory Council (July, 1993).

Report from the Committee on University Planning. University of Guelph Senate (March, 1994).

Pulse. December, 1992. Volume 3, No. 1, Incoming student update: Quality of new students continues to improve.

Benjamin, M. Student Experience Study. *Freshman daily experience: Brief overview of a qualitative study* and *Changing relationships: Normal problems and possible solution for entering students.*

Glasier, Ken. *Fall Orientation '94: Final report.* Office of First Year Studies.

Gilbert, S. & Auger, M. *Does START provide a HEADSTART?: An assessment of the possible outcomes of the START program.* (November, 1989).

Akademia 1994-1995 Questionnaire.

Queen's University of Kingston

Report to the university senate by the senate orientation activities review board. (November 24, 1994).

Residence evaluation survey, results 1994/5. Office of the Director of Residences.

A principal's discussion paper, Queen's learning environment. August, 1990. David C. Smith.

York University

Report on first year student surveys. Office of the Associate Vice-President. (November, 1990).

Evaluating the undergraduate experience. A survey of second year students at York University. Office of the Associate Vice-President, Admissions and Recruitment. (October 1991).

Steps to arts: Report on the first year. Harriet Rosenbery, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts. (June, 1994).

A study of the expectations of students entering York, their experiences over the course of their studies, and the outcomes of their university experiences. (1992).

Student Satisfaction Survey (1992-1993)

Faculty of Environmental Studies, Supplementary Admission Information Form.

Faculty of Arts Network Advising Survey

Advising Centre Survey

Brock University

Cognitive effects of research training on first year students: A male-female comparison. Walter Watson, Nicholas Yarmoshuk, Department of Sociology. Paper presented at: Symposium on Sex differences in Response to Research Training, 74th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, December, 1975.

Mount Saint Vincent University

Nonsexist language: A progress report. Deborah Kennedy. *Canadian Journal of Education 18* (3), 1993, 223 - 238.

University of Victoria

Doing well being well: A program for transition from high school to university. Cheryl-Dean E. Thompson. B.A. Thesis in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of an Honours Degree in Psychology. Dr. L. Acker and Dr. J. Parsons, April 1991.

Laval University

Ford. J. D. *Mathematics assessment of first year engineering students.* Eighth Canadian Conference on Engineering Education, Laval University, 24-26 May 1992.

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Donna Hardy Cox, *Using student assessments to improve academic programs: Student success and the quality of student life.* Paper presented to the AUCC Symposium "Measuring Up: Indicators to Manage Change," Winnipeg, November 15 - 16, 1993.

Trent University

Introduction Seminar Week Questionnaire (evaluation of the week, impressions, satisfaction, use of services, attendance).

Trent International Program Orientation Camp (satisfaction, suggestions for improvement)

Wilfrid Laurier University

Sheldon Birnie - Lefcovitch. *Adaptation during the transition from high school to university: An examination of selected person, environment and transition perception variables.* April 1994.

University of Calgary

Donaldson, E. L. & Dixon, E. A. *First-year chemistry student intentions and perceptions,* June, 1993.

Report on junior mathematics for Academic Program Committee. October 7, 1992.

Draft report of FIG Programme evaluation. Dr. Lorna Cammaert (Sept. 29, 1994).

The University of Calgary First Year Experience Program pilot study (1989-1990). May, 1990.

First Year Experience Proposal. February, 1992. Dr. Lorna P. Cammaert on behalf of the Committee.

1993 Incoming Student Summary, Executive Summary.

Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee to Academic Council. May 1994.

University of Manitoba

Research Report. Student Affairs, published monthly.

University of Saskatchewan

Admission average distribution 1993/94: First year first time direct entry colleges. (Frequency distributions). *Statistics 1994*

National Native Access Program to Nursing: Summary report October, 1994 (Frequency distributions).

University of Lethbridge

New Student Preview Student Evaluation Form.

University of Ottawa

Incoming Student Survey

Le logement étudiant sur le campus est-il suffisaant pour repondre a la demande? (Avril 1993) - Planification I et II Deroulement, Evaluation.

University of New Brunswick

Admitted Student Questionnaire. Measures the value of university characteristics in the selection process, quality of information, financial support systems, background information, admissions process.

University of Regina

The first semester: A survey of student experience and academic performance. Measures first semester university experience, external influences, the value of the seminar, outcomes (wpa, attribution, retention).

University of Toronto

John Kirkness. (May, 1994). Questions on Surveys: Partial Answers.

First Report of the Provostial Advisory Committee on the Undergraduate Student Experience. (August, 1992).

Provost's advisory committee on the undergraduate student experience: Scarborough retreat report.

Orientation at the University of Toronto.

University of Western Ontario and University of Guelph

Making the Match: Between University Graduates and Corporate Employers (James C. Rush and Frederick T. Evers). Measures background information; pre-university education, university background, current employment, job history, post-university training, and skill development.

Ryerson Polytechnic Institute

Student Survey 1991, Background, Family, Lifestyle, Membership in Education equity Target Group, Perception of Ryerson.

Faculty/Course Survey

School of Applied Geography, First Year Student Survey

St. Thomas University

Residence Staff Evaluation Form - resident satisfaction with student affairs office and residence staff, proctor on each wing, residence handbook, residence rules.

End of Year Residence Survey - student views on residence living.

Presentation Evaluation

Articulation Or Liaison Prior To Admission

Memorial University of Newfoundland

"Ask me" and "Help" - Faculty, students, and staff wear T-shirts with the "Ask me-Help" logo. A service that focuses on the first week of the semester. Faculties are encouraged to keep the logos up throughout the semester. This program is delivered by the Student Volunteer Bureau.

University of Calgary

Career/Life Planning Modules, Career Success Sessions

Acadia University

Orientation Week. List of services and orientation program outline.

Orientation for Mature Students. Program outline.

Acadia University Welcomes the World. Description of a six day pre-academic learning program.

Acadia University Summer Orientation. A one-day orientation program during the summer.

Lakehead University

Parent Orientation program of events.

Parent Handbook includes Helping hands at Lakehead; Facilities and Services, Did you Know?, map, campus guide, academic calendar, Parenting a First Year, and Who should you call?

University of New Brunswick

Faculty Advisor Handbook and *Family Handbook* includes Promoting student retention and success: A developmental approach, orientation affairs, academic affairs, academic support, financial affairs, student affairs, employment affairs, safety and security affairs, recreational facilities and the SUB.

UNB'94 Orientation - program guide and registration.

Beaverbook 94-95 - the UNB Student Union handbook.

Orientation After Admission

no response

Family Involvement/Support Programs

no response

Equity Access for A Target Group

no response

Aboriginal Student

Lakehead University

Department of Indigenous Learning: Achievement Through Effort Description of department, goals, directions and services. Includes mental health, peer support and counselling, personal counselling, on-campus elder's program, regularly scheduled healing circles, tutors program, social support network, LUNSA, culturally relevant social activities, LUNSA annual elder's conference, community based activities, financial assistance (emergency loans), scholarships/ awards/ bursaries, employment placements and career counselling, computer labs, native housing organization and assistance, travel boards for students, day care information.

Race/Ethnic/Cultural Student

no response

Gender

no response

Course Placement Tests

no response

Assessment of Literacy, Numeracy, Learning Skills, Etc.

no response

Academic Advising

no response

Language Development

University of Toronto

Writing at University, Faculty of Arts & Science. St. George and Erindale Campuses. Description of guides, services, and writing labs.

Mathematics Development

University of New Brunswick

Writing and Math Centre - program guide and description of services.

Learning Skills

no response

Short-term Student Success Seminars or Workshops

University of Victoria

A self-paced, modular course.

University of Saskatchewan

Option B: A special study skills course. A non-credit course in academic skills development extending across the fall term. Recommended for students dissatisfied or concerned about their academic performance. Special interest for unclassified students, special admission and mature students.

Brock University

Brock 101: a seven week, non-credit, non-compulsory transition course

Lakehead University

Workshop announcements - Study Skills Seminars (six sessions starting September 27), Stress Management (2 sessions, 30 participants), Women and Self-esteem (2 sessions, 15 participants), Resume Writing Seminar (1 session, 20 students), Job Search Strategies (1 session, 20 participants).

University 101 Term Course

University of Prince Edward Island

University 100: a six credit hour course that provides an introduction to university and university studies. The general aim of the course is to enhance the first year experience of students and to help them gain the maximum intellectual, cultural and social benefit from their university experience.

Textbooks:

Gardner, J. N., & Jewler, A. J. *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*. Wadsworth, 1992.

Rasool, J., Banks, C., & McCarthy, M. J. *Critical Thinking: Reading and Writing in a Diverse World*. Wadsworth, 1993.

Trinity Western University

IDIS102 - Core requirement for all TWU baccalaureate degrees as of Spring '95 graduation. Objectives: To help student understand the nature and purposes of a Christian liberal arts and sciences education; to assist students in understanding how a Christian world view affects the procedures and perspectives of some of the main academic subject areas taught at a Christian university; to challenge students to see their university studies as an opportunity to reflect their acknowledgment of the lordships of Christ over their time, talents, and future academic endeavors; to encourage in students the continuing development of their own Christian world view, an aspect of fulfilling the university's mission of developing godly Christian leaders with "thoroughly Christian minds" who will desire to serve God and humanity in the various marketplaces of life.

Required text: Homes, Arthur F. *The Idea of a Christian College*, Revised ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987.

Augustana University College

General Studies 101: This course is concerned with developing your academic skills in the context of a liberal arts and sciences university. This is accomplished in part through time management and study skills, but particularly through the development of critical thinking skills.

Textbooks: Gardner, J. N. & Jewler, A. J. *College is only the beginning*. 2nd ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publication Co., 1993.

Turabian, K. L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, These, and Dissertations*, 5th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Memorial University of Newfoundland

MUN 101: A non-credit, no cost course organized by academic services coordinator. This course is all about basic academic survival,

with tips on academic writing, using the library, study skills, note taking, as well as tips on how to keep healthy, both physically and mentally. This course is offered in 10 sections, meets twice per week for a 50 minute session.

University of Guelph

Introduction to Higher Learning 58-150: A credit course to assist entering students make a successful transition to the educational experience at university. The course provides students with a formal opportunity to explore the concept, thought and setting of the University of Guelph within the framework of their own lives and experiences.

St. John's College, University of Manitoba

University 99.111: This course is part of the Masresa Program designed to offer an integrated learning experience to first year students. It is designed to enhance their transition to university studies.

University of Regina

University 100: (UEPS-001) a compulsory non-credit seminar for Entrance Program students (voluntary enrollment open to all students on campus). The course is designed to enhance academic, personal, and vocational success.

Introductory Discipline or Survey Course Integrating First Year Concepts

no response

Course Cluster Formation To Support Discipline Integration

University of Toronto

199Y First Year Seminar Program: A program designed to introduce small groups of students to faculty and scholarship. The courses focus on a theme (humanities, interdisciplinary, science, and social science) and allow students the opportunity to learn how to think analytically and to express ideas and logical arguments clearly.

Student Cohort Formation To Facilitate Interaction

no response

Structured Empathic/Instructional Links Between Students And Teachers

no response

Career Counselling

University of Calgary

General Studies 301 Career Management: Optimizing educational and occupational transitions. In this course you will explore the theoretical and practical aspects of career development, higher education and transitions from a multi-disciplinary perspective. The overall purpose of the course is to provide students with both a theoretical understanding of career development and the skills to manage career transitions, now and in the future.

Lakehead University

Counselling and Career Centre - description of the personal, career, study skills, career, resource library, and chaplaincy services.

Personal Counselling

no response

Faculty/Teaching Development

Queen's University

Instructional Development Centre - acts as a resource/consultant to persons planning programs for first year students. Programs include academic courses, student life orientation sessions, and learning skills programs. Services include: the Teaching Series, a consultation service for individual instructors, consultation to departments, special programs for teaching assistants, a resource library, and new faculty orientation programs

University of Ottawa

Centre for University Teaching - Workshops focus on special groups, such as new professors and teaching assistants, and are coordinated

with different faculties and services to meet unique or individual needs.

Brock University

Some Problems in implementing practical activities in pre-collegiate and undergraduate anthropology courses. Watson, W.

Student's perceptions of the significant effects of undergraduate field experiences. Watson, W. & Yarmoshuk, N. A paper prepared for presentation to the Institute on Students in the Field; Council on Anthropology and Education. December 1, 1973.

Everyone walks streets: An undergraduate programme in the analysis of social relations. Watson, W. &Yarmoshuk, N. Original paper presented at 71st Annual Meeting, American Anthropological Association, Toronto.

Brock undergraduate program, Watson, W., & Yarmoshuk N. A paper prepared for presentation to the symposium on "New Programs in Teaching Applied Anthropology" Joint Annual Meeting Society for Applied Anthropology Council on Anthropology and Education, Boston, March 1974.

Two row programs, Self determination in education, Watson, W., & Sylvestre, T.

University of Toronto

Teaching Services - Description of services includes TA training, access to educational databases, maintains current print and audio-visual material on university teaching and learning, specialized research assistance, faculty exchange through TEACHCOMM (an electronic discussion forum), and supports special interests through "current awareness" and "document scanning" services.

McGill University

Centre for University Teaching and Learning - The Centre provides consultation on course planning, presentation skills, program development, evaluation, workshops, seminars, and discussion groups. Credit courses are available. (449-582 Educational Theory and Instructional Strategies (3 credits), 449-588 Instructional Design in Higher Education (3 credits), 449-589 Teaching and Learning: Systematic Instruction in Education (3 credits), and 416-098 Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (non-credit)). Research in the learning process at university.

Residence Life

no response

Special Focus Initiatives By Institution

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Med Quest is a program of the Faculty of Medicine to give rural high school students the opportunity to explore careers in the health sciences in a research forum.

Student Ambassador - Senior students linking alumni with new students from their home town. Student ambassador and alumni find space to hold a "send-off" in their hometown. The send-off usually involves an oral presentation, a screening of the "Opening Doors" video (discussing the first year experience) and a question and answer period followed by refreshments.

Opening Doors (1994). A guide to promote personal, social and academic growth and development for faculty, staff, applicants, and students at Memorial. It includes a video and several guides. Each guide contains: The Program, People, Recruitment, Training, Program Implementation, Evaluation with copies of the surveys used, Student Service Resources and Bibliography. The title of the guide books are: A Guide for Facilitators - includes objectives of the video and video summary with suggestions for complementary activities. Book 1 - The Program, Book 2 - The Student Ambassador Send-off Program, Book 3 - The Student Ambassador Coordinator, Book 4 - The Orientation Program, Book 5 - The Orientation Coordinator, Book 6 - The Peer Orientation Assistant Program, Book 7 - The Peer Orientation Assistant Coordinator, Book 8 - Appendix which summarizes the organization and resource management of the Program.

Opening Doors to Campus Resources summarizes Memorial University services.

Observations/Conclusions/ List Of Publications By Institution

Carleton University

Handbook for New Students. Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Social Sciences: Includes Introduction, Guide to Registration Process, Guide to Course Selection, Guide to Course Selection, Guide to Available Courses, Advanced Standing Guide, Certificate and Diploma Programs, Guide to On-Campus Services, Important Dates and Deadlines, and Map of the Campus.

This is Carleton: Where your future begins. Guide to the programs and services of the University; posters, and introductory brochures (New developments, School of Architecture, Engineering, School of Journalism, Application Information, Scholarships and Financial Assistance, Campus Tours, Residence, Student Fees, Athletics, and Scholarship Application).

University of Manitoba (St. John's College)

Opportunity Courses. Description of courses designed to assist student transition to university.

Entering first year at the University of Manitoba? Course description of 99.111 Introduction to University, a credit course for first year students.

Don't get lost in the crowd. A description of the services, benefits, history, residence, and spiritual life of St. John's College.

Brock University

Sexual Harassment Policy. What it is and what you can do about it. (Brochure). Policy and Procedures

So This is Brock. Orientation information and registration form.

Student Services Brochure. Brief description of Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, Campus Ministries, Financial Aid Office, Housing Office, Conference Services, Hospitality Services, Health Services, International Services, Counselling Centre, Career Services, Learning Skills, Personal Counselling, Special Needs, and the Mission of Student Services.

Brock 101 Flyer. Registration form for a seven week course designed to help with the transition to university.

Brock University Accessibility Admissions Policy. Information for applicants of Aboriginal ancestry, visible minorities, and applicants challenged by a disability.

Native Autumn Welcome. An orientation organized by the Brock University Aboriginal Educational Management Council.

Learning Skills Posters and Workshop Descriptions.

University of Prince Edward Island

University 100 at UPEI, Opening the Window to Success as a Student. Information package, sample syllabi, a descriptive brochure, two papers dealing with the course, and related material.

Concordia University

Your Guide to Concordia's Orientation Programme. Agenda and registration.

The Bridge, Orientation Newsletter. The World of CU Libraries, Workshops Galore, Inequity and Sexual Harassment, First Year Experience Workshops.

Trinity Western University

Many People, One Mission, 1994-1995 Student Handbook. A description of the university, mission, community, Student Affairs, University Enterprises, and other TWU Services

O-week, 1994. Orientation Program Guide

McGill University

Orientation Kit

Reading and Study Skills information on the course (6 hours) and workshops (1 hour)

Stop Sexual Harassment - definition, examples, what you can do.

University Ombudsperson - information on fairness and equity for students

Office for Students with Disabilities - summary of services, hearing impairments, visual impairments, coordination/mobility impairments, learning disabilities, chronic medical disabilities

McGill Nightline - peer assistance provides listening, information, referral, confidentiality, anonymity

McGill University Libraries - location, hours of service, term paper research workshops, library tours, and internet services

McGill University Chaplaincy Service - location, hours of service, student centres, and chaplains

McGill Career and Placement Service - on-campus recruiting, CAPS counsellors, career days, career development workshops, individual counselling, Job Postings, Grad Bank Referrals, The Work Study Program, Career Resource Library.

McGill Student Health Services - user guide - appointments, emergency drop-in clinic, health promotion, laboratory services, and medical notes

McGill University Counselling Service - orientation to university life, career planning, testing, career resource library, personal counselling, groups and workshops

McGill Tutorial Service - summary of cost, code of conduct, and how to prepare for tutoring

Sex, Drugs, and Alcohol - information on responsible conduct in a university setting

The Guide - Introduction, Orientation for New Students, General Student Services, Students' Society, Macdonald Campus, Campus Services and Activities, Students' Society Facilities and Activities, Libraries, and Maps.

Student Rights and Responsibilities (June, 1994) - Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures, Revised Code of Student Grievance Procedures, Charter of Students' Rights, Regulations Concerning Complaints of Sexual Harassment, Ombudsperson for Students, Policy on Conflicts of Interest in Academic Supervision and Evaluation.

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Parent's Guide to Memorial

Tack: Information for first-year students (Academic Advising Centre)

Films: Year of challenge, Opening doors, Making waves, and Give it my best shot.

First-Year Seminar Series Orientation '94 - New Friends . . . New Frontiers folder (includes: Program Guide, a picture postcard from the Peer Orientation Assistants (POA), brief history and description of the university, introduction to the mascot, Introduction to the Writing Centre, an Academic Resource list, description of the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre (responsible for coordinating services for students who have temporary/permanent disabilities associated with learning, vision, chronic illness, mobility and hearing), business card of Safety Services, postcard from the Memorial University Botanical Garden at Oxen Pond, business card from WALKSAFE, Council of the Student's Union Handbook and Day Planner, and "Ask Me for Help" button.

Queen's University

First Year Commerce at Queen's University: What you need to do before September, School of Business Undergraduate Program - a welcoming letter outlining procedures and resources related to registration process, orientation, and academic supports - includes preregistration, software skills, purchasing a computer, calculus preparation, survival tips and timetable grids.

International Centre Newsletter - regular newsletter introducing services including a

LISTSERV, describing exchange programs, student services, and campus notes.

Queen's University's International Study Centre at Herstmonceux Castle Student Guide - description of the program, course overview, campus, admission requirements, fees, documents, and code of conduct.

Residence Life, Queen's University, 1994-1995 (Mission, Student Responsibility, Application Procedures, Residence Fees, Charges and Services, Residential Housing Options, Residence Rules and Regulations, Phone Numbers, Postal Codes, Campus Map).

International Centre Annual Report - outlines mission statement, services, program highlights, work/study abroad program, internationalizing the campus, associated clubs and groups, and the history of the Centre.

University of Calgary

Focus - a brochure that overviews the faculties and services of the university.

The Native Centre and the First Nations Student Association - information on the Society for Aboriginal Master Students, study groups, cultural program, aboriginal student advisors, student orientation, and courses.

New University Students - information on the comprehensive first year experience program including New Student Orientation, Presidents Welcome, Frosh Interest Groups (FIGS), and Peer Support Centre (PSC)

FIGS - registration for frosh interest groups

New Student Orientation - bulletin on orientation for all new students including special orientation for adults, transfer, international, and student with disabilities.

Get the Edge - registration for Day Orientations, BBQ Orientations, Weekend Orientations, Student Wilderness Orientation Program, Adult Student Orientation, International Student Orientation, Orientation for Students with Disabilities, Engineering Student Orientation, Nursing Student Orientation, Residence Student Orientation, Successful Student Days, The Presidents' Welcome, Parent Orientation, and Orientation for Unclassified and Transfer Students.

Successful Student Days - registration for Classroom Survival, Stress and Time Management, Learning Your Learning Style, Information Technology and You (IT and You).

Returning to Learning - registration for a two day program for non-traditional students (multiple role students, returning learner, student with a disability, not the traditional 18 - 22 year old age group).

President's Welcome - registration for a barbecue with the president of the university and the Students' Union, prizes, and music. Schedule of events includes welcome, processional, frosh links, frosh oath, and barbecue.

My First Week at the University of Calgary - information on what is expected, required, and available for students.

Peer Support Centre - information on the resources that peers can provide regarding survival (personal, family, and academic).

Parent Orientation Evening - registration for tours and banquet.

Thinking of coming to the University of Calgary? - information on a day to "try on" the University.

Admission letter - includes a "to do" checklist after admission to the University.

University of Guelph

Report on the Mature Student Orientation and the special events and support systems designed to support students who are 21 years of age or older when they begin university. (Budget implications - 1 professional staff and peer helpers).

Start '94 - information on the pre-university lectures and workshops (one and two day

sessions) in introduce new students to the university.

Start '94 (Parent's Program) - information on the parent sessions that accompany the student Start sessions (brochure and bookmark).

Partners in Education - a newsletter for parents contains information on student life, parent participation, News Watch, profiles on staff and students, the "Exam Survival Kit", and the open house event.

Alumni Send-off '94 - for new students and parents in particular regions

Office of First Year Studies - brief description of the Transition Project, Start, Orientation, University College Connection, Akademia, and Introduction to Higher Learning 58-150.

Meetings new challenges - information on the resources of the Learning Centre - workshops and short courses, individual consultation, printed materials, programming, seminars, non-credit writing courses, and peer helpers.

Transitions - a series of workbooks on making the transition from high school to university for secondary students and their families. The series includes: Academic Change, Relationships, Wellness, University Parents, Planning Your Finances, Your Future, and Involvement.

Akademia Program Guide- information on admission, selection of courses, courses in Akademia, Continuation of Studies, Transfer to other programs, Residence life, Scholarships and Awards, and Administration of the Akademia Program.

Writing and English Language Programs for International Students - information on courses, seminars, and resources.

Handbook for Students with Disabilities - information on admission procedures, terms of reference, academic accommodations, negotiating accommodations, services, writing exams, scholarships, getting involved, and a campus map.

Dream Big: Run with the World - Orientation Program Guide and welcome.

University of New Brunswick

Writing and Study Skills Workshops - information and registration brochure for workshops on improving your reading, writing, and study skills.

Math Help Program - information on free math help available through tutoring and workshops.

University of Ottawa /Université of Ottawa

Salut! Hello! - information on orientation

Intensive and semi-intensive courses in English or French - information on the services of the Second Language Institute; description of tuition fees, the courses, resources, living accommodations, and options.

Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

Les activites socioculturelles: listing of social, language, music, computer, dance, photography, and physical activity programs. Helping student achieve their intellectual potential.

University of Saskatchewan

The Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) - Description of the special services including cross-cultural education, on-going tutorial, academic, and personal counselling services, elders. Meeting the need for more First Nations Educators. Objectives; entrance requirements, support services, program requirements, and graduation.

NORTEP/NORPAC Teacher Education,

Professional Access College. An opportunity for northern people to obtain a teacher education and other professional careers.

SUNTEP, Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program, Gabriel Dumont Institute. A description of the Bachelor of Education program complete with services for people of Indian/Metis ancestry in particular.

Native Law Centre; Programs and Activities and Program of Legal Studies for Native People.

Information on the services and program.

Aboriginal Justice and Criminology Program for Native Students (ABJAC). Description of the admission and program requirements.

Affirmative Action Program for Students of Native Ancestry. Goals, program information, and admission requirements.

National Native Access Program to Nursing. Goals, program information and admission requirements. List of participating universities.

Experience it! An overview of the services, academic programs, and opportunities available to students of the University of Saskatchewan.

It's Your University. High School Liaison Newsletter. Published each semester. News and updates for guidance counsellors and students interested in the University.

Taking control of your career direction - Registration for four sessions on career development available to first year and returning students.

First & Best - A description of the application process for the Presidents Scholarships.

University Residences - Description and request for an application form.

Scholarships and Awards - Application procedures and brief descriptions.

The University Orientation Program - Brief information and registration form.

Student Counselling Services - Description of the psychotherapy, career, and academic counselling services.

University Study Skills Program - Registration form for the basic study skills workshop including time management, strategies for improving motivation, concentration and memory, writing term papers, and preparing for examinations.

University of Toronto

Partners. A referral guide to Student Services at the University of Toronto, Office of Student Affairs. A alphabetical guide to services as defined by student needs and university programs, departments, and services.

University of Victoria

Learning Skills Program - information on services, programs, courses, workshops, and peer assistance.

Counselling Services - information on career counselling, personal counselling, learning and study skills programs, career & personal groups, and peer assistance.

Retention Programs - information on orientation (Explore, Shadow Program, High School Visits, Buddy Program, Week of Welcome, Early Bird, Gold Card Program, and International Students' Orientation, Native Student Orientation, First Year Centre), counselling services (Special Needs Counselling, Peer Helping, and Counselling Groups), Academic enhancement Programs (University Learning Skills course, Modular Learning Skills Course, Structured Study Groups and Workshops), and Experimental Programs (High School Counsellor, "Doing Well Being Well," and Wellness Programs)

Peer Helping Centre - Information on students helping students on personal, social, and academic issues.

New Student Information Centres - bookmark of location and service hours.

University of Waterloo

The First-Year at University: Enhancing Student Success (TRACE, Teaching Resources and Continuing Education.)

York University

The Faculty of Arts Academic Information Sessions for Newly Admitted students.

Faculty of Arts - First Year Handbook (Academic Advising, Enrolment, Fees and Registration, An Overview of the Faculty, University Policies and Regulations).

Faculty of Arts First Year Course Selection Guide and Lecture Schedule of Course Offerings

Welcome to York, The Parent's Handbook (Academic Life, Campus Life, First Year Experience, Why parents are important to York)

Faculty of Arts, Network Advising Program (Peer assistance with academic studies and life)

Teaching and learning at York, A guide to the programmes and services of the Centre for the support of teaching

Advisor's Corner, A monthly newsletter, Faculty of Arts, Advising Centre

B.B.A. Insider, The voice of York University's Undergraduate Business School. (Newspaper)

University of Toronto

The Campus Life Electronic Bulletin Board Service - established to provide electronic communication systems for the University of Toronto's student governments and recognized campus groups.

Interdepartmental Initiatives To Support The First Year By Institution

University of Ottawa

First-Year Transition Program Board Committee (Programme de trasition a la premiere annee universitaire; sous committee "Preparation", "Accueil", "Soutien", comm. et recherche). Goal is to facilitate the transition process by coordinating the efforts of various units on campus.

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Provehito in Altum (Launch Forth) - mandatory two-day orientation seminar consisting of lectures and workshops covering tests on students' note-taking abilities, budgeting, time management and learning skills. A collaborative effort involving student leaders, faculty and staff.

FUSS (First-year University Student Society) and SOTA (Students Older Than Average) - student societies to provide information and activities to help students adjust. Other themes in the societies include jugglers, music, culture, history, politics, religion, Grenfell groups (academic) and the Marine Institute.

University of Guelph

Akademia - a first year undergraduate experience in the arts and sciences designed to provide an integrating perspective of education and learning within the context of the baccalaureate degree programs of the University. Titles of the objectives are: "Literacy, understanding forms of inquiry, numeracy, sense of historical development, depth and breadth of understanding, global understanding, moral maturity, independence of thought, aesthetic maturity, and love of learning."

Queen's University of Kingston

Queen's 101 - A series of options, informal educational events on matters that first-year students find to be problem areas or topics of great interest, and ultimately to help them with their transition to university. (Responsible decision-making, personal safety on campus, study skills, exam preparation, alcohol awareness, healthy eating, money management, relationships, sexual assault, sexual health, social issues, societal discrimination, the Canadian mosaic, and women's/gender issues).

University of Manitoba, St. John's College

The Manresa Program is designed to provide an integrated learning experience to a limited number of students taking First-Year Arts in St. John's College at the University of Manitoba.

First Year Experience Course Textbooks Used by Survey Respondents

Field, D., Gilchrist, G., & Gary, N. (1989). *First-year university: A survival guide.* Toronto, ON: OISE Press-Guidance Centre.

Buckley, J. (1991). *Fit to print.* Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Fleet, J., Goodchild, F., & Zajchowski, R. (1990). *Learning for success.* Toronto, ON:

Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich.

Jewinski, J., & Vardon, J. (1992). *Essays and reports*. Faculty of Arts, University of Waterloo.

Grayson, P. A., & Meilman, P. W. (1992). *Beating the college blues*. New York, NY: Facts on File, Inc.

Monte, C. F. (1990). *Merlin: The sorcerer's guide to survival in college*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

O'Day, D. H. (1990). *How to succeed at university*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Rowe, B. M. (1992). *The college survival guide*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co.

Gibbs, K. (1993). *University degrees and learning with ease: Proven tips for success in higher education*. Gloucester, ON: Keith J. Gibbs.